



St. Timothy Presbyterian Church

FORGIVENESS

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Sermons

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I Did Not Know It

July 20, 2014

Genesis 28:10-22

Unexpected Life

The way life turns out is very interesting. When I look at a little kid and many young people, how your life will turn out will be very interesting. It's not something that is predictable. We cannot see how life will turn out. That is what life is like. I think Jacob misunderstood life. Jacob thought that he was able to control everything that happens in his life, even the blessings from God. Last week we meditated upon that. Jacob stole the blessing from Esau, from his father, and then he stole the birthright. He thought that he was able to control everything in his life. But many unexpected things can happen in life. You will probably encounter many, many unexpected things in your life. Right now you have something that you want in your life, but maybe 10 years down the road, 20 years down the road, you will never know how your life will turn out. In that way, life is a strange thing. And also I would like to say life is a mystery. It is not a fixed concept. It is not completely drawn yet. It is yet to be drawn, it is to be unraveled. So it is a mystery to how life will turn out.

Look at Jacob. He never expected that he would end up in the wilderness all by himself. That was not why he bought the birthright and stole the blessings from his father. He thought, "If I have the birthright and if I have my father's last blessing, my life will be okay automatically because this birthright and blessing from the father must have some kind of miraculous power that will make my life really, really good." He never expected or thought that he would end up in the wilderness all by himself, but in the end he did.

Alone in the Wilderness

I wonder how Jacob might've felt in the wilderness all by himself. "Gosh, I have the birthright and I have the blessing. What am I doing here? I cannot even stay home. I'm running away from the home where I can have a good time with friends and family, my mother and everything. Now I cannot even stay home, I'm just running away to a place that I don't even know!" His life was very, very different from what he was expecting. He wasn't used to staying up all night in the wilderness

because the wilderness was not his thing. He truly was a mama's boy. He just stayed home all the time with this mother. To Esau, the wilderness was his place. He was always in the wilderness. He was hunting, and he is very familiar with the wilderness. As for Jacob, the wilderness was a strange place. He never went to into the wilderness.

Most of time, he was at home. He was a very domesticated guy. So the wilderness was very, very new to him. Not only it is new but it is a scary place. Think about it. He was all by himself in the wilderness. He heard wild animals crying. Everything was very new, strange and scary. The night was dark, his future was very dark. He could not foresee what was waiting for him. He could not foresee what was ahead of him. Everything was dark to him. Jacob the trickster. Jacob the liar. He used his tricks and he got what he wanted, but in the end, he got nothing but the dark night in the wilderness where he was lonely, scared, and very uncertain. He must have been really confused about God, about blessings, about birthright and everything. I think he was very, very confused. This was the first crisis he encountered in his life. This was the first dark night in his life, probably under up to this point, his life was very well controlled with his mom and around the house. His life was pretty comfortable, but now he experienced the first crisis of his life. High school students. When you encounter the first crisis in your life, remember this message.

His wakeful world was full of fear, uncertainty, and confusion. His guard was up and therefore he could not see anything but darkness. He had his guard up all around him because he was so scared. So he didn't like his wakeful world. All he could see in his wakeful world was fear and terror. Only in his dreams, would you find his guard down, he could see what he cannot see in his wakeful world. He could see the reality of God. He could see that God was right there. This was his confession: "Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it." The Lord was always right there, but because he was filled with fear and uncertainty and darkness, he could not see that. The Lord was always right there. Now in his dreams, he met God, he found God and said, he was right there and I did not know it. Sometimes we meet God in the most unexpected places or in the most unexpected circumstances.

Finding God

Philip Yancey, who wrote a book called “Finding God in Unexpected Places”, he said this: “Jesus was a master at finding God in unexpected places.” Jesus found God in a tax collector who did not even know how to do a formal prayer. He found God in a foreigner who had failed marriage five times. Jesus found God in a man who had been sick for 38 years with no hope. In the most unexpected places, Jesus somehow always found God. We expect to find God in a sanctuary in a holy place, but Jesus found God in the most unexpected places and unexpected circumstances.

Today’s scripture tells us that we find God in a man who runs away because of his lifestyle of trickery. We don’t necessarily find God in the holy sanctuary; where you can hear beautiful choir anthems. Many times we find God in a place where people struggle, fail, hurt, mourn, get disappointed, angry. In those places, we would never expect that we will find God in those places, sometimes we find God. In our own dark times, we find God.

As you can see the stars most clearly in the darkest sky, you can see the power of God’s presence in your darkest time. I’m not sure whether or not you’re too young to experience your own darkness. Everybody goes through dark times. When I started sharing this in KSM, I saw tears and after the service, some woman came up to me and shared her story. I never expected that she would go through that difficult time. No wonder she looked so dark and gloomy, I didn’t know her story. I cannot share everything she told me, but she’s shared such a devastating experience that she’s going through and she said “What you said is true.” Sometimes during my own dark times, I find God. Last Wednesday, an elder came up to me and he said, “Reverend, when times are good, it doesn’t matter how good the sermon may be. It doesn’t really hit me, but when I go through a difficult time, every word that you say really penetrates into my heart and it hits me. Reverend, these days, I live because I have the word. Otherwise I would not have survived.”

Sometimes in our dark times, we truly find God. When the sky is dark, you can still see the stars. St. Paul expressed that in many different ways. This is what Saint Paul said: “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” You would expect that when sin increases, that curses will abound more. That’s what we think, but St. Paul said when

sin increases, the grace abounds more and more. When you're going through your own failures, whether it's a moral failure, a personal failure, or a job failure, school performance failure; when you look at that failure very carefully there is God's grace powerfully working underneath. You may never know but the Lord was always there. You're only filled with guilt and disappointment, but that's where God's grace works within in you. Life is not always easy. Sometimes you're thrown into the wilderness, into the darkness and you're right there. We find holy ground. We find a holy place where we meet God face to face. Jacob called it "Bethel," meaning "house of God." We don't find God in a holy place. The place you find God becomes a holy place. You don't necessarily find God in a sanctuary, but when you are going through so many difficulties in your life, if you find God then that place becomes a holy place to you.

Three Promises

We celebrate life not because it is good and easy. No one always lives a good and easy life. We celebrate life though, because in all phases of our life, there is God transforming our existence. During good times, God provides joy, happiness, and abundance. During bad times, God provides his presence and the powerful work of His grace that brings about the transformation. With God, our non-place becomes a sanctuary! With God, empty time becomes a sacred moment! With God, our sinful existence becomes a holy existence! Do you want to truly find God? When you go through difficult times, look carefully at what God is doing. You will then find God powerfully working within you. When Jacob finally met God in his dream, he received these three promises. The three promises are this: I'll be with you, I'll protect you, and I'll bring you home.

In that wilderness, when he was all by himself in that cold place, he got these promises. Three promises; that God will be with me, that God will protect me, and someday God will bring me back home. When you go through your own dark times, always remember these three things. God will be with you, and God will protect you, and God will bring you back home. Don't ever forget that. In your suffering where you mourn and suffer and ache, you're not by yourself, God is right there. You may not have recognized it yet, but God is right there. These days, the news really gets me down. The situation with Gaza and Israel. How could a human being send a missile up in the sky and send it down to where

I did not know it

civilians are and it kills off hundreds of people. What kind of world is this? What kind of life are we living? What kind of people have we become?

I do believe that someday, God will bring about his own justice. If you remember these three things in your life, you will have a meaningful journey of life even though we don't know what we will face in our journey. Especially with high school students. You're young. You're full of life. Live a good life. When you face a crisis, don't get discouraged. Don't give up. Don't just sit on your problems. Remember, God will be with you. God will protect you, and bring you back home. That's a promise that we hold on to, all of us! Let us keep those promises with us. God is with us. God will protect me and God will bring me back home.

Distorted Image

January 10th, 2016

Ones Image

We all want to live a very good and happy life. That's what God wants for us too. Our God is not a God who's jealous about us having a good time. Our God is not a God who only sees our negative side and makes us feel guilty when we are happy. God is happy. God doesn't want his children to be miserable. Like parents don't want their children to be miserable. You know, we're not jealous when our children are doing very well. In the same way, our God is very happy when his children, we are doing very well, but surprisingly many people have a distorted image of God. I wonder how that got into our consciousness, but we have so many people living with this distorted image. You know, depending on what image you have about yourself, your life will be very different and your life perspective will be different. The distorted image is the image of God who's always angry, fearful and ready to punish us. Somehow we have this nagging thought about God, that God is always not pleased with you, not happy with you and always ready to do some negative things to you. See, I have this distorted image of God. We can never become close to God. How can you become close to a person who's always fearful, critical and negative? You don't want to be around them. You don't want to approach them. In the same way when you have that distorted image about God, you don't want to come close to God. You want to have a safe distance. So you live your life maintaining the safe distance from God. Okay? God, I'll pay my respect, but I don't want to get too much involved either. So instead of loving God, we fear God. A lot of people, their faith is about fearing god rather than a loving God.

We keep up our kind of religious life, but not really life of faith. We have tremendous guilt within us and that guilt assess certain distorted images about God. Then where does this distorted image come from? I was wondering maybe from Sunday school? When you're young with your sensitive ears, your teacher really scares you. If you don't act well or do well, you'll go to hell and hell is like a big fire, then you will forever suffer there. I don't know maybe you got that from Sunday school or from your fearful parents. If your parents are disciplinary kind of parents, we sometimes get the image of God through our parents because we cannot see God. So they create a certain image of God and everybody creates a certain image of God and then they create the image of God

through the image of their parents. Maybe sometimes from the Bible. I mean there are some scary passages in the Bible, so whatever it is, I don't know where that distorted image came to us and ingrained in us. My suspects, my suspicion is that we have created our own distorted image. It's not from a Sunday school teacher, it's not from the Bible, It's not from a parents. We have imposed this distorted image upon ourselves. We are the culprits. We are not 100 percent satisfied with ourselves and we ourselves are the greatest critics and maybe the worst enemy to ourselves. Sometimes we do not live up to our own expectations of ourselves, so when we experienced failures and disappointment about ourselves, the failures confirm that we are not as good as we want to be. Guilt becomes piled up in us.

Accepting Myself and Others

I don't know why we live with such a negative image of ourselves. I don't know why we live with such a deep seeded guilt and this distorted image about ourselves is easily and readily translated into God's attitude towards ourselves. when I cannot accept myself, how can we expect that God will accept me, when I am not pleased with myself? How can we say that God will be pleased with me? God knows me more than I know myself. God knows my deepest secrets and all the dark sides that I don't even know sometimes. We hide as much as possible. Nobody knows, but God will see that and how can God love me? How can it be? This is why you're scared of God? We fear God because he knows what you do when you're alone or in your thoughts sometimes, you think "I don't want anybody to know, I don't want God to know", but God knows. We know that God knows everything about us. We don't think God has such a great image about us and God is not 100 percent pleased with us. We have firm belief in this negative thinking about ourselves and about God. We can never hear the good news that God loves us. This theory, God loves me. That sounds good, but I cannot believe that. Believing in Jesus Christ means that you believe that God loves you. God sent Jesus Christ to us because he loves us, but we'd never can truly accept that without a doubt. Believing in Christ, it's not really abstract images, You just believe. Believing in Christ means that, "Oh, God loves me that much, that he sent Jesus Christ to us". That's what believing in Christ means.

Zacchaeus

Zacchaeus, all his life lived with this distorted image. He was a tax collector, during that time tax collectors were the lowest of the lowest, the worst in society. Not because they are poor, they are rich. Actually, the scripture says that he was rich, but morally and ethically, they were the lowest of lowest. You don't want to deal with them. Everyone says, "oh, you're a tax collector really?", you don't want to associate with them. Think about what that does to the self image of Zacchaeus. He lived all his life with that distorted image about himself. He didn't want to live with that guilt and that image all the time. So he wanted to be healed somehow. He didn't have a fiscal disease, he didn't have any other problems. He was rich. He didn't have financial problems, he was okay with this right? But he had a problem with this distorted image. So he wanted to be free from that and came to Jesus, not because he has an illness, but because of this bothering thought within himself. He was so short and went up to the tree to see Jesus and you know what? among all those people, Jesus chose Zacchaeus. He noticed Zacchaeus. Nobody really paid attention to this man, but Jesus noticed this man and called him. Choose him, "I'll stay at your house". Among all those people, God chose Zacchaeus to make him a special portion for Jesus to stay at his house. Jesus did not choose him because he was great. Jesus choose him precisely because he thinks that he is not great. Zacchaeus then all of a sudden, realized that I'm a special person. I'm not this or that, I'm a special person, I'm a precious person. When we are free from distorted image, we change. When you feel guilty, you don't change. Zacchaeus changed completely. He restored his image. So what did he do? he said, "half of my position, I'll give to the poor". So he gave half of his position to the poor and if he ripped off anyone, he would pay them back four times. He has changed completely. When we are free from distorted image, we can become free and we can become generous and from self sufficient people we can became generous people.

Forgiving Others

Why can't we forgive other people? because of distorted image. See, if you're confident about your image and somebody criticizes you, whatever, it doesn't bother you that much, but when you have distorted image and then somebody tells you that, then you get really angry, and can never forgive that person. when we are free from the distorted

image, then we can be truly free from our selfishness, greed and narcissism. Jesus said two things to follow Jesus Christ. One, deny yourself and the other, take up the cross. Selfless sacrifice. He is talking about Zacchaeus who was able to practice that, not just in theory. In real life he was able to practice that. We are the victims of greed, selfishness and narcissism. I want all of us to be free from that. Faith is not about your feelings. Faith is very concrete. Zacchaeus concretely, was able to give out for the poor. That's salvation. That is evolution, evolution is not just going to Heaven after you die. Salvation is total freedom. To be able to be the self giving people.

Be With God

That is the power of healing. I hope that we may be free from this distorted image. My friends, you are created in God's image. You're not created in that ugly image that you have. You are created in God's image. I hope that we can all believe, that's a fundamental belief that we have to have about ourselves. Then we can build our life upon it. This year you may be free from that distorted image and then actually press on to know God. As long as we have that distorted image, you would run away from God. You will hide from God continuously and you'll catch yourself doing that. People do that in a very sophisticated way, but instead of hiding away, come close to God and get to know God in an intimate way.

No One Can Live Without Forgiveness

March 13, 2016

Matthew 6:14-15

No One Can Live Without Forgiveness

No one can live without forgiveness. Why? Because we're not perfect. No one is perfect. We all make mistakes. We all do things or did things we should have never done. We all said things we should never have said. We all hurt others intentionally or unintentionally, but whether you hurt others intentionally or unintentionally doesn't matter because being hurt is being hurt. We are not trying to determine who's right or who's wrong. We all have regrets. We all have our own painful past. We want to forget and change it or redo it,

But we can't, simply, we cannot do that. That's why we need forgiveness. Otherwise, the burden of guilt, shame and regrets will be, too much to bear. They'll eat us up and they will consume us, and a lot of people do lots of things to deal with their own guilt, shame and regret. Sometimes they punish themselves. They may feel good if they punish themselves for their wrongdoing, but by doing that, we cannot get rid of the burden of guilt or even lighten the burden of guilt. We don't feel any better. Maybe when you punish yourself, maybe then, but soon you don't. You realize that you don't feel any better. Sometimes we are trying to do wonderful things, great things to compensate for the wrongdoing, so we did, but you can never do that. You can never undo wrongdoings that you did by doing wonderful things. It's just playing games that doesn't cancel out what we did in the past and sometimes we try to justify ourselves saying that, oh, it wasn't really, really my fault. I didn't want to do it, but she made it. She made me do it, or he made me do it, like Adam in the Bible, you know, she gave me this fruit.

Dealing with Guilt, Shame and Regrets

Well, sometimes we justify ourselves saying that, oh, it's all circumstances in that circumstance. I have no choice but to do so, but you always have a choice. By doing that, we don't feel any better or our situation doesn't get any better. No matter how hard we try, we know that we cannot take off an ounce of the weight, of the burden of guilt and shame and regrets. Maybe guilt, shame and regrets are something that we have to suffer through. Maybe. Maybe there's no other way. There is

no way around it, there's no way to ignore it and avoid they won't disappear. They'll still be there. The more you play blind eyes to them, the more deeply they will torment you. The moment we open our eyes it's right there. Gazing hard at us.

We will always encounter incidents, events, people, and situations that trigger off our guilt, shame and regrets. And then we enter again into dark tunnel of mourning and grief. I once went to Ohio, Columbus Ohio. It was a listening skill lab. So for a whole week I got training for the listening skill and it was wonderful time. The guest speaker was talking about his own painful experience. That once, he had a lecture, and then a couple was coming in and then saw them. They were the ones who gave him so much pain and hardship. After the lecture he pulled a facade. And then said very nicely and kind of how are you, how are you doing? long time, no see every day and chit chatted for sometime. So he did very well. When he came back to the hotel, all of a sudden he had so many hives all over his body and he was heated up and had a fever and he was trembling and he realized that there was still pain left in him. That pain that was caused by this couple, we realized that was within us. Cannot be easily undone. Even our guilt, shame and regress don't just disappear just because we wish them away. They follow us around and surprisingly they surface sometimes and drive us into deep darkness and even despair.

Trust in God's Forgiveness

The problem is there is nothing we can do that's a problem. There is nothing we can do about it. We cannot forgive ourselves. Can you. You may say that you forgive yourself, but you still feel miserable. You cannot forgive yourself. You cannot undo what you did. You cannot change what happened. You cannot get rid of guilt shame and regrets without decision and willpower. You cannot say, "oh from today. I'm going to forget about it." You can't do. You cannot make decision on things like that. That's why we need forgiveness. That's where I believe God's forgiveness comes in. Not really. There's nothing that we can do but there is God's forgiveness, but unfortunately many people don't trust in God's forgiveness. They try on their own to deal with their own shame, guilt and regrets. They don't believe there is a power in God's forgiveness.

Of course, if we can get forgiveness from the people that we hurt, then that'll be great, but thing is it is impossible. Sometimes we don't even

know we whom we hurt and sometimes the people that we hurt are not around so it's impossible to do so, so we come to God's forgiveness. As we come to God's forgiveness, something strange happens, something wonderful happens. Something we can not do happens within us. Of course, Guilt shame and regrets may not simply disappear just because you come to God's forgiveness. They don't just disappear, but they try not to remain as they are. They change somehow their face, the guilt, shame and regrets change. How do they change? They change into a broken spirit, a broken heart. When we come to God with humility, when God's forgiveness works within us, then guilt, shame and regrets, turn into a broken heart, and this broken heart brings about forgiving heart. This is a process of that I cannot make on my own, but when we come to God, this happens. Guilt turns into broken heart and broken heart creates and forms within us the forgiving heart.

A Forgiving Heart allows you to Give and Receive Forgiveness

That's what Jesus meant today in today's passage. If you read it again, "for if you forgive others their trespasses or their mistakes may say, your heavenly father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, neither will your father forgive your trespasses. Jesus is not talking about forgiving acts, forgiving behavior. Oh, you forgave that, so I'll forgive you a and you didn't forgive that and I won't forgive you. That's not what Jesus means. Jesus is saying that if you have forgiving heart, then you can forgive others and also you can receive forgiveness, forgiveness from God, but if you don't have forgiving heart, you cannot forgive others and that you cannot receive forgiveness from God either. That's what he's saying whether you have forgiving heart or not, depending on whether you have forgiving heart or not, you cannot forgive others or you can forgive others or you can receive forgiveness from God or you cannot receive forgiveness. Forgiveness from God. Important thing is forgiving heart and that forgiving heart is created when you come to God's forgiveness and that guilt shame and regret turn into forgiving heart.

So many people live with a hardened heart. They just simply don't know how to forgive. They just simply don't know how to receive forgiveness. This world is filled with people with hardened hearts, revenge, anger, animosity, hatred, they're continuously ready to attack each other. Just a little thing fires up there are so angry and get back to you. This world has become such a world of hatred, hardened heart. By ignoring guilt shame and regrets, we develop hardened heart. Then we become people who

don't know forgiveness. Then these things will consume us and destroy our heart. That's not the way to live. That's not the way to build community. This is not the way we relate to each other by ignoring them, by justifying them by simply suffering them will not help us deal with our guilt, shame and regret. They will torment us within us and slowly make us people we don't want to be, but with humility and faith. When we come to God, God helps our guilt, shame and regrets change into broken heart, and then we'll experience the power of God's forgiveness. God is alive, God is alive and God's forgiveness is alive.

Through a Forgiving Heart we can Finally be Free

What, we cannot do God did and God does. And through forgiving heart we can finally be free, free from our own guilt, shame and regrets. And we are free to embrace others and forgive others,

You want to see concrete example in the scripture? The concrete example is David. David lived with his guilt and shame and regret, but he came to God for forgiveness and this is what he prayed, "create in me a clean heart, oh God and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain in me a willing spirit." He didn't try to deal with his own guilt, just leave it for awhile. He didn't try to deal with guilt on his own and shame he came to God. This is action of David coming to God instead of suffering all by himself or justifying, he just came humbly came to God. Restore Spirit within me. Do not cast me away from you create in me a clean heart. When he did that, he realized the broken spirit is formed within him. That guilt turned into broken spirit. He experienced and that broken spirit he recognize and so he's next passage. He said this, "for you have no delight in sacrifice. If I were to give a burnt offering, you will not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. O God, you will not despise" Within himself. saw broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, but also he realized that God will not despise that.

That's different from guilt. That's different from guilt. Jesus once said, "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God. That poor in spirit is broken heart, broken spirit. It is the heart that is formed within us. When we come to God's forgiveness. Let us come to God's forgiveness. Do you have a heart to forgive others or to have a hard time forgiving others? Do you forgive your parents? Do you forgive people

who hurt you? Have you received true forgiveness from God? God can make you free.

Forgiveness Is the Focus of Our Life

August 7, 2016

John 20:19-23

There is no Future Without Forgiveness

That's why he even died on the cross to give us forgiveness. Desmond Tutu, a South African Nobel Prize winner said, "in South Africa, there would have been no future without forgiveness." When apartheid was terminated, he saw the danger in crisis of the country being totally paralyzed. If the people chose the way of retaliation, they could easily go into the way of retaliation and he saw the danger and crisis of his own country through his skin. He felt that, but they chose the way of forgiveness. The film *Invictus* captured the sentiment very well. Blacks in South Africa hated their only a rugby team. The Springboks, they wanted to scrap the Springboks because the team was mostly white and it represented prejudice and apartheid in their minds. Mandela was concerned about racial divisions between black and white South Africans, which could easily lead to violence, chaos, and total disorder. Mandela supported the team and had the vision that this team maybe would unite this country before the big game of the world championship. At that time held in South Africa. The team captain visits Robben Island where Mandela spent 18 of 27 years in jail. There are the coach looking around the cell and he said this, "Mandela spent so many years in a tiny cell and came out ready to forgive the people who put him there."

Life is Supposed to be full of Joy, Happiness, Gratitude and Love

Desmond Tutu was, right South Africa would have no future without forgiveness. My friends. This world has no future without forgiveness. We have no future without forgiveness. This world is filled with anger, hatred, and vengeful heart. The violence you see these days is often motivated by greed. You take away somebody else's, property, whatever, but these days the violence and terror are not motivated by greed, but by anger, hatred and retaliation. Hatred cannot be defeated by hatred. Evil cannot be defeated by evil. When somebody hates you by hating back, you cannot defeat the hatred. You're destroying both. So many people live in this world, in uncontrollable anger. No one can survive with that degree of anger no one can survive with that bitterness. No society can survive with that deep anger and resentment. Good life is full of love, joy

and gratitude. The world, the life that we see in these, these days, it's not really true life it's dysfunctional life. Life is supposed to be full of joy, happiness, gratitude and love.

Forgiveness is the Antidote for the Poison Inside of us

And I believe that that is only possible by forgiveness. You know, we are not surrounded by angels and saints. We are surrounded by many broken people around us. There are so many broken people around us and broken people can be hurting, their words, their behavior and their attitude can hurt us. They may not mean it, but because they're suffering so much that suffering also cause suffering in other people. It's like poisoning us. It's like poison within us and we carry the poison sometimes with us and in return poison other people. Sometimes we don't even know what kind of bitterness we have inside of us. We're not even conscious of walking a bitterness we have inside of us and we don't even know how we hurt other people because of the poison within us. Hurt and pain spread like infectious diseases. We cannot live our lives with poison within us that will destroy us and destroy other people. Forgiveness is like taking the poison of hatred out of your system. That is why forgiveness is the most important thing in life.

Forgive, don't Retaliate

That is why before modern research, we only talked forgiveness in church and all that, but these days modern research scientists, they are studying forgiveness and they realized after studying forgiveness they realize that forgiveness can transform people, physically, mentally, and spiritually. I do believe that forgiveness can transform us and so many of us suffering from that poison without even realizing it because he manifests itself in a very, very different way, but only through forgiveness that poison can be melted, can be taken out of our system. So forgiveness is a powerful skill, powerful life skill. It is an essential life skill. You want to live a good life? You have to have this skill of forgiveness to survive in this hostile world. It is necessary skill, a life skill that we must have not only to survive, but to thrive in life. We need to learn the art of forgiveness, it should be the focus of our life every day, every moment we think about forgiveness. How can I forgive somebody that should be always in our brain? We should find it. We should search hard for the way to forgive, not the way to retaliate, to pay back and to conquer.

“We have to always think hard to find a way to forgive this.” Desmond Tutu said this. I’m using a quote from South Africans a lot because our team is in South Africa right now. They are doing mission there. As Desmond Tutu said, “choosing forgiveness rather than retaliation ultimately serves to make you a stronger and a freer person.” How true that is. This world needs forgiveness. Without forgiveness, this world will not be able to sustain itself. Each and every one of us and one of them has to learn how to forgive. Forgiveness is so hard. It is so difficult. Probably the most difficult thing to do in life. That’s why you don’t see true forgiveness often around us because the forgiveness is so hard. Retaliation is always easy way out. That’s the easiest to do. That’s why in many Hollywood movies the conclusion is retaliation, payback, show them off, but there’s not really many stories about forgiveness. Jesus’ story about forgiveness or the story about the cross that is a very unique story that we have as Christians. Forgiveness is so hard, that it’s almost impossible we say, “I can’t do that.” You say, I don’t want to forgive.

Forgiveness is a Result of our Spiritual Discipline

Jesus knew that very well, so in today’s scripture passage, before Jesus told them to forgive, what did Jesus do? What did Jesus do? Jesus, what Jesus did was this. Jesus said to them, again, “peace be with you as the father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit. Then he said to forgive. Jesus knew that disciples cannot do the forgiving on their own with your own strength. They needed the help of the Holy Spirit.

So we realize that forgiveness is a spiritual thing. I went to Ohio one day and then this a guest speaker. He was telling me or telling us about his own, struggle that I mean he had such a hard time with one of the congregation members. When he was doing ministry in another part of the city and then the other city, he was doing the seminar and then when he saw this person, that person who gave them, so I gave him so much difficult time. Hardship was right there. It was fine. So he greeted them and and all that, he came to the motel they were staying and all of a sudden all the rash, all over the body and he realized how painful that was, how much he was hurt inside and how he didn’t really deal with it and reconcile with it. Forgiveness is difficult. You cannot do it emotionally. Your emotion does not allow that.

Too painful to forgive. We are too weak to choose the way of forgiveness. Forgiveness is a result of our spiritual discipline. When you

become spiritual and deeply enter into spirituality only little you can forgive. It's not that you just do a little bit of a spirituality and you can't forgive this much. No, you can do so much of spiritual discipline and at the end the result is only little. You can truly forgive, but that little forgiveness is so liberating. It is so beautiful where there is true forgiveness, life comes alive. My friends, we all need forgiveness and also we all need to give forgiveness. That's what humanity is supposed to live by. That's how humanity survives. We don't survive just on bread. We survive on forgiveness and this world simply doesn't know anymore how to forgive and god called us to do that ministry of forgiveness with each other, and that is. That is God's calling this afternoon.

See! New Creation!

See! New Creation!

January 1, 2017

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

See! New Creation!

Oh, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. Everything old has passed away. See everything new. Everything has become new. The old is gone. See, the new has come. I'm going to explore that a little bit today. I mean, it is exciting to have a new year it's a brand new year. Send away the old and welcome the new of all the 365 days, what better day will there be? Will it be to think about sending away the old and welcoming the new the first day? So today that is the best time for you to think about sending away the old and welcoming the new. You know, human beings are so smart.

Reorganizing for Change

I think that they are really, really smart. I mean, they created the calendar. They made new year, you know, as far as time is concerned, there is no new year. Time is just continuous flow, December 31st January first or July fifth, it doesn't matter, it's just same time, time just flows continuously. But we human beings created organized time in such a way that this is January first and this is 2017 and we are starting a new day. So I think they're very, very smart and I liked that in that way it is much easier to organize my life by having the new year we can start fresh and new. So every year you have new opportunity almost. So you, you use that, you use that opportunity every year. I think that this is a new year and then you are given a new opportunity. We can make a closure to our past 2016 and we can open the door for the new year. 2017. You know, when I was young my parents always bought clothes and shoes on December 31st and then they put on top of our bed, and the next day we could wear the new clothes and new shoes. I was so excited to, you know, wait for the next day to wear the new and new shoes and I asked my brothers and he didn't remember just vague memories, so either I liked it so much that I fantasize that I had that history or they just gave me. Sorry brother.

That's life. I mean it is a wise thing to do, to use the new year to reorganize our lives instead of treat instead of treating January first as just another ordinary day, treat it as a special day. This is a new

beginning for my life. At least I want to begin the new life in 2017. What are some of things that you want to achieve? What are some of things that you want to change? What are some of things that you dream about? You have vision about? I hope that you can really expand your dreams and vision this year and you can start always, the new life. I mean resolutions. We always break within three days. We break them, but still, even though you break them, make some resolutions instead of just having another day, make some resolutions. What do you really want to do this year and then make concrete changes.

Do Not Repeat Past Mistakes

Don't just think about being a new person. To be a new person, what do you need to change? Concrete change that you have to make. Albert Einstein had a very interesting definition about insanity. He said, "Insanity. Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." That's insanity. Doing the same thing and you expect something different. I mean, I hope that this year, instead of living out the insanity, I hope that all of you make some concrete changes to something differently this year, whatever it is, and then you will see something different new year, but new year does not give you change. Automatically, new year does not make you a new person automatically. Doing exactly the same thing and expecting different results is insanity. So do something differently. Since my birthday's in January, whenever new year comes, I think about aging and these days, I realized that aging is not just getting old.

Do Not Get Old, Become Renewed

I don't even know what my age is anymore. I don't count that too many to count, but aging, I realized that it's not just getting old. Aging is being renewed. Aging is being renewed. By aging, we don't just become old, but we become renewed. I, I like to look at aging in that way. Every year I get renewed rather than getting old. And this is not what I said. This is what Saint Paul said, "Though our outer self is wasting away." In other words though, you get old, you get aged, but our inner self is being renewed day by day. Your outer self may be wasting away, but your inner self should be renewed everyday, every month, every year, since it doesn't matter the age, whether you have this renewal within you or not, that's what's important.

Baggage of Our Past Weighs us Down

With the new year, you become one year older, but don't just get old, be renewed every year. You should be renewed, but you know, I think change is rare, I was thinking, I was reflecting. Why doesn't, why change doesn't happen, why people are the same, exactly the same. Old self, I reflected on that and realize that it is a baggage. The baggage that we have, the past old baggage that we have, that baggage weighs us down. It blinds our eyes. It blocks our site. We all have baggage and we let the baggage pull you down instead of being renewed. So this baggage just keeps us not from being changed. Therefore, because of this baggage, we cannot see beyond what we have seen. No imagination, no vision. You know when I have a conversation with people, they're smart. It's not because they're stupid, they're smart, but they can't think beyond, why? Because I realized that they have a lot of baggage within them, and so with that baggage, the vision and the way they see the world is limited in certain way. Instead of having a freedom to think about big thing, they are limited because of that bag. They cannot see beyond what they have seen. That's what I realized. Our eyes are so fixed in a certain way that we cannot see things in the new way. Spouses are just nagging nuisance always. Parents are people whom you don't, you want to leave a certain distance, not too far, not too close. Those we see each other the way we see ourselves have to change the way we see it has to change. Our understanding is very limited.

Open Your Eyes to Change

Change is not doing 'A' and then you do 'B'. That's not what change is. Change is not just doing different things. Change is, you open your eyes and now you can see something in a totally new way. That's what change is. Change is, not just doing one thing and then the next one doing something else. change is your eyes are totally open. You can embrace and you can see things in a very radical new way. That's what change is. So if that is a real change that the first thing that has to go for you is the baggage. There all kinds of baggage; Hurt, pain, insecurity, but that baggage has to go. How can we let go of our baggage though?

New Creation through Spirituality

Is it more psychological or philosophical? It is spiritual. Baggage can be let go only through forgiveness. Forgiveness is not what you do. Forgiveness is what God does. You only receive forgiveness so he's not any more psychological. You're not psyching yourself to let go of your

baggage. It's not logical. It's not philosophical. It's spiritual. Only God can take away your baggage through forgiveness. That's what Saint Paul said in the scripture, "so if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. The first part, the sustenance. If anyone is in Christ, you are a new creation and the next sentence is a process. What's going on within it? How can you become a new creation?" He says, "everything old has passed away. See, everything has become new." That's a three process. Everything old has passed away, that means, your burdens are removed. Your baggage is removed. If you're in Christ, through forgiveness, that baggage is removed from you. When the baggage is removed, what happens? Your eyes are open now. That's why St Paul says, see, behold, because now now you're able to see your eyes, open. Baggage is used to blind your site and then as the biggest baggage is gone, your eyes are open. Now, see, that's what Saint Paul says,

and then third, everything new has become new. In other words, Now when you see everything, you can see it in a new way. All your past mistakes, failures, damages done to you. Your shortcomings will not be able to bind you anymore. When you are in Christ, God has forgiven you. The old is gone. Now Open your eyes. You can see it and see the world. See Yourself, see others in the new way. That is the power of forgiveness, my friends how forgiveness is possible? Only when you believe, I don't know what else.

Forgive yourself to be Renewed

When you believe that forgiveness is possible, when you see yourself, when you see baggage within you, you know what that baggage does to you? And with a sincere desire to remove those baggage. You come to God? That is repentance, and then when you believe. then God lifts up your baggage through forgiveness, so repentance and belief that desire to want that baggage to be removed, that is repentance, and now you believe, then by forgiveness becomes complete and the damage that the baggage has done will be crucified with Jesus Christ on the cross. Only then new life is possible.

It is not psychological or logical philosophical. It is spiritual. I hope that this year, New Year, this forgiveness becomes real to all of you. I hope that you all become free from the baggage that enslaves you. Don't bring the baggage of 2016 into 2017. That's dumb. Don't do that. Start the new year with forgiveness, be forgiven. We Christians have this

See! New Creation!

amazing system, that system of forgiveness. We don't just live our lives. We live our lives forgiven. If you come to God, God is willing to forgive you. When you have a sincere desire to be changed, God will forgive you and will change you. That's the power of God. That's the power of forgiveness. I don't know how else I can explain to you about forgiveness, about being forgiven. Trust. Good God, when you come to him, he will forgive you and make you free. Make you a new person. You deserve to live a good new life. 2017, maybe the year you start something new for yourself.

Don't Be Rude, Be Kind

February 5, 2017

Matthew 5:38-42

Ephesians 4:31-32

A Simple Principle

Look at those two sentences. If I may summarize in one sentence. That is, don't be rude. Be kind. So that's it. That's my sermon. I can go down. Well, what more can I say? Don't be rude, be kind. That's what summarizes this particular passage. I think it's a very simple principle, but very important and a principle for a good life. Don't be rude. Be Kind.

Always keep that in mind every time you interact with people, as you live your life. Always remember, don't be rude, be kind. It's almost like saying, don't worry, be happy, same as don't be rude, be kind. I mean, don't worry, be happy is a very nice catchphrase, but don't be rude, be kind. Is as good a catchphrase as don't worry. That is something that you should always keep in mind in your daily life. Be mindful of that. Be conscious of that. If you cannot do it, work on it. If you keep doing it, you'll get better at it. Don't be rude, be kind. The Dalai Lama said, "Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible." This is a very profound message. Be kind whenever possible, but it is always possible. We always have to find an opportunity to be kind. That's simply a good thing to do as a human being, and when the opportunity comes, do it. Be kind to others.

This is what Jesus taught us. If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also, and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give them your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone. One who begs from you and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

Resistance From Within

While writing my sermon, when I wrote this part about Jesus, this came to me. First I chose only the Ephesians passage and then I put the Matthew passage too. That passage came to my mind as I was writing my sermon and as soon as I put it down on my paper, I wanted to

scratch it out. I really wanted to scratch it out because there's deep resistance that was coming from within me. I said, no way. Who can do that? That is a stupid thing to do. People say, if anyone strikes me on the right cheek, I will strike right back. I'm not stupid. I'm not a doormat. If anyone takes my coat by suing me, I'll make sure to take it back and more. If anyone forces me to go one mile, never mind the one mile. If anyone forces me to do anything, I won't do it simply because it was forced upon me. No one can force me to do anything. Give to everyone who begs from me, then I'll be broke. This is ridiculous. It's stupid. It's crazy. You can easily put aside this kind of teaching by saying that it is too idealistic. We can't survive with this kind of teaching especially in this day and age. This is a crazy thought, but I didn't scratch it out. It still bothered me because it was the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was not a teaching of a crazy lunatic or self centered fanatic. It was our Lord Jesus Christ who gave us this teaching. So instead of putting aside, I reflected on it, read it again and again and again. The more I read it, I felt something beautiful about this teaching. I don't know how much I can practice this in my life, but there is a beauty to it. I felt the deep love of Jesus for others.

Love Your Enemies

Right after this teaching, as you read further along, Jesus said, love your enemies. Love your enemies? Love and enemies don't go together. It's not a sentence that makes sense. Love your enemy? Love your neighbor makes sense, but love your enemies? It doesn't make sense. These are not two words that go together, love and enemies.

Then I realized the love Jesus is talking about is very different from the love that I know, or most people know. The love Jesus is talking about is radically different.

Love your enemies. I want you to reflect on that. Love your enemies. Only when we understand this kind of love from Jesus, then what the Dalai Lama said is possible. Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible. Only when that kind of love is there, then what the Dalai Lama said can work.

The Opposite Extreme

What Jesus taught about turning the other cheek is one extreme. Yes, it is an extreme message, but the world is going the other extreme. People

are running towards the other extreme. The world says, before they strike me on my right cheek, I will strike them first. Preemptive attack. Someone said, not only do we not love our enemies, we don't even love our neighbors.

Choose to be Kind

Instead of ignoring the teaching of Jesus Christ as idealistic and unrealistic, we need to take that message deep in our heart. Kindness comes from the kind of love Jesus taught us. We can be rude in many situations. But my friends, choose to be kind. Whatever situation you may be in, choose to be kind. Choose your words to be kind. Choose your facial expressions to be kind. Choose for your life to be kind. If possible, choose to be kind and remember, it is always possible. If you can say first "Hello, hi", don't wait for other people to do so.

Be kind to each other. Be kind to humanity. Be kind to the earth. That's what our garbage initiative is all about. Be kind. One word, one smile, one action that comes from kindness has a magical power to have impact on people. When you step out the door everyday in the morning, say to yourself, Lord, give me an opportunity for me to show kindness. Every morning when you step out the door, tell yourself, Lord, give me the opportunity for me to show my kindness. You won't just find one opportunity, but you'll be able to find many opportunities.

Opportunities to be Kind

Last Friday I was finishing up my sermon on kindness and I prayed a in the middle of it, "Lord let me live my life being kind", and then as soon as I finished, "ding dong". At the church, there's a doorbell and I don't usually go out. The secretary usually goes up and down, so I waited a bit, another "ding dong" came, and so I went out and then this one woman who was preparing lunch for KSM brought all these groceries and meat, so God gave me the opportunity to be kind. Even though I have a bad back, I carried heavy meat, and it was good. It was so strange that right there, God sent me this woman for me to be able to show kindness

As we live looking for the opportunity to be kind, you become happier, and you make everyone happier. When you're rude, you become unhappy, and you make many people miserable.

Once I got into this elevator, and as soon as I walked in, there was a woman and she said, nice hair. What? Nice hair? My hair is my worst feature in my mind. Nobody tells me about my hair! I don't usually do my hair, I just look briefly, but on that day, hearing "it's not bad" as soon as I walked into the elevator, she made my day. I still talk about it. I will never forget that.

Being kind has a powerful impact on people. Happiness is very simple. Be kind. You don't need to be a philosopher. You don't need to be a doctor. You don't need to be a lawyer to be kind. You don't need to be a millionaire to be kind. And also one great thing about being kind is that you can be kind to anyone, even strangers. You can be kind. Be a kind person, simple as that.

As you try to be kind, you realize how proud you are, how problematic you are. You realize that you cannot even simply be kind to people. Don't gossip. I don't know why people gossip about people they don't know very well. Say Nice things about people. Don't talk behind people's backs. That's not a nice thing to do. Say good things, uplifting things about people. Being kind involves everything. Humility, a big heart, love, compassion, everything. It is a wonderful principal. Don't be rude. Be kind.

Closed Door

April 8, 2018

John 20:19-23

Disciples Hid

Fear is a funny thing. It is real and it's very concrete in a way. Once fear takes a grip on us, it paralyzes us. And also in fear, we feel like we're very small and powerless.

And also when the fear attacks us, often we locked the door and we want to be behind the closed door. Fear does many strange things in our lives. All kinds of things it does today. You see a group of people who are completely paralyzed by the fear. They were the disciples of Jesus Christ. So let us look at when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met, were locked for fear of the Jews. I mean physically, literally that happened. But also I think it has a symbolic kind of message there. They were so scared. They lock all the doors and they kind of hid behind the closed doors. I mean, after Jesus died to think the Jewish rulers would have just left him alone. I don't think so.

Fear is Gone

They would have looked for other disciples who were part of that movement which caused so much trouble for them. They wanted to arrest them. If they could, they would have killed them. So they just wanted to get rid of the seed of that movement altogether. That's why they were looking hard for these disciples and that's why the disciples were really, really scared. But the risen Lord did not leave them alone behind a closed door, that's what our risen Lord does, when we are behind a closed door, our risen Lord does not leave us alone there. So the risen Lord came to them, and this is what he says when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met, were locked for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them among them and said, peace be with you.

He came to the disciples to lift them up from fear and to liberate them to free them from fear. And then the way he liberated them from fear was to give them the peace. The peace was a real thing. That peace was given to them so that they were able to overcome their own fear. I was thinking about fear and peace. Both are very concrete. They both affect our lives, but they are on two opposite poles. I can say a radical contrast between these two if I use some kind of metaphor or imagery. When I think about fear, I feel like very. It's like a storm and furious sea. The waves high and no control. There's no anchor. You're just all over the place, all of the map when you're in fear or this storm and wind and you see that. But when I think about peace, it's like a calm lake or even 100 meters below the surface of the ocean, which is a very chaotic underneath of 100 meters down there is peaceful, quiet. Fearful heart is like you're all over the place. You have no centre. You're very anxious and you worry a lot but peaceful heart is almost like power, is a confidence that you are ready to handle your problems, that you have this inner quiet confidence that you can deal with your challenges of life

Come Out

It's unshakable. Nothing can shake you, but fear. You're just shaking all over the place. The risen Lord gave the disciples this peace, it was very different from what they felt at that time, and I had this image, imagery, that peace Jesus gave kind of entered into them and swallowed up the fear, that kind of image I got. Jesus gave him the peace and peace entered into our soul and swallowed up our fear.

And then Jesus sent them out. Don't stay there behind the closed door. Go out. That's what Jesus said. Jesus said to them, again, peace be with you as the father has sent me, so I send you, don't stay here. I'm going to send you. You have to go out and you got to live what you're supposed to do. Doing what you're supposed to do. Don't just stay behind. Today's story is almost like is a turning point for disciples. Until then, they really did not know Jesus until then did they were people or fear, but after that they were radically different people. They went out and live with confidence. They locked the door tight, but no door. Doesn't matter how tightly they lock it cannot keep the risen Lord from coming in, Jesus broke through their tightly closed hearts and entered into the depths of their soul and chased out the fear by giving them peace. I realize a piece is more powerful than fear. Once we have peace, that peace will be able to chase out. I mean once we have peace, the peace will be able to chase out the fear. I believe the peace is more

powerful than fear, so the person who lives with peace is more powerful, can live more powerfully than people who live with fear.

Fear in Life

When we have fear, we close our heart. We don't let anyone come. No matter how long and painfully maybe we think that that is the safest thing to do. They just closed their heart. They don't let anybody come in. They get locked up.

We have this one week of an examination of the ministers candidate from theological school. They have to go through this one week process and there were examiners who examine all of these students. And a few times I went to that conference as an examiner and a few people I rejected there. The reason that I rejected them was after one week I told my other counsellors, I don't know them, I talked with him. I interviewed them. I don't know who that person is. I don't get a sense of who that person is because that person is so locked up. He or she doesn't let anyone come in. You may be safe behind the closed door, but you will not have freedom. You shall know the fear and the fear show make you safe. This is not a scripture verse. This is what I wrote. True, but Jesus did not teach that. Jesus taught this. You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. So decide. Do you want safety or do you want freedom? Fear may give you safety, but only the truth will give you the freedom. People who are in fear always look for safety. They always choose the safest way, but the people of resurrection have peace of Christ and confidence they can come out of the closet, come out of the closed door. Because they have confidence, they can be creative. Because they have confidence, they believe that the uncertainty of the future is not something that they should fear or avoid at all costs, but to embrace it because they trust the promise of God.

The promise of God is stronger than the uncertainty of the future. People who are in fear will look at everything in life with a negative attitude. They see life as an enemy to win and defeat, but the people of the resurrection do not see their life as an enemy. They see it as an opportunity. The way you look at life is different depending on what you have. If you have fear, you will look at life as an enemy. If you have peace, you will look at life as an opportunity. People in fear also see other people as enemies. They guard themselves against them. They cannot open their hearts to them because they're too scared to be hurt

and their relationship relationships become very difficult. They cannot relate to people.

Fear and Forgiveness

The risen Lord brought the disciples out of the closed door. Jesus made them the people of resurrection and gave them the power and authority. This is a first time Jesus met the disciples after he was risen. First time he told something, and then this is the last time he would have said this. In other words, the most important things that they were supposed to do. Jesus told him into the story. This is what you have to do. This is how you're going to live your life. Before he was taken up, ascended into heaven. This is what he left with them and then he gave them the power and authority, and what is that? Verse 23. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained. This is a power and authority. Jesus left the disciples with. This is what we are supposed to do as the people of resurrection, as the disciples of Jesus Christ.

To forgive somebody is the most difficult thing in the world and that Jesus left us to do that, but you know how hard it is to forgive anybody?

When we are in fear, we can never forgive anyone. Forgiveness is not possible in fear. In fear, you can only see hatred, condemnation, anger and division. To forgive others and to embrace their faults and weaknesses. You need power and I believe that power is the power of resurrection. That power is the power of the spirit that frees us, humanly is impossible, but only through the power of the spirit we can do that. Last Wednesday was the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. He fought for the black people in US. He fought for the weak and the vulnerable people who are victims of racism, but he never fought the fight with hatred.

He always fought the fight with the attitude of forgiveness. This is what he said, forgiveness is not an occasional act. It is a constant attitude. That's how he thought the racism in US, and this is also what he said, darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hatred. Only love can do that. He fought the fight as a person of resurrection. He didn't build the walls. He didn't fight in the closed door. He came out to the light and fought it with love and forgiveness and that's the only way and God gave that ministry to us. People of resurrection should go out and live our life of forgiveness. That's our

portion. God did not tell us to go and condemn and judge others. That's not our portion. God told us to go out and forgive. Do the ministry of forgiveness. Fear goes to anger, anger goes to violence. That's what we see in the world around us every day, but God called us to go out and do the ministry of forgiveness. Let us come out of the close door and enjoy the freedom. The freedom is the freedom to forgive. That is what the people resurrection should do.

The disciples did that. As a matter of fact, they gave their life away. Just to do the ministry of forgiveness, are there people that you need to forgive or do you need forgiveness yourself so that you can come out of that fear and live a life of freedom.