

Living it out (Application):

Who do you need to forgive? Can you treat forgiving as a verb not a feeling and what does that mean you will DO now?

Coming Up at St Mark's

Youth BBQ on Sunday 15th Sept, for all in Year 7 and above. Meet at church and bring some meat to cook. 7:30-9:00pm

Back to Church Sunday is Sunday 29th Sept. Pray about who you will bring to church that Sunday.

Harrogate School of Theology – Saturday 14th Sept 9-12 at St. Mark's Church. Rev Professor David Wilkinson speaking on Genesis 1-3 in the light of modern Science.

Harvest Supper and concert. Saturday 21st September. Pie and pea supper followed by a musical entertainment. Tickets available from the office next week



prayer

Please pray for...

Thank God for times of refreshment over the holiday period.

Pray at the start of a new term as church groups start up and children return to school or start new schools.

Pray for Alan and Jane Norton, for Alan's increasingly complicated health issues and long term care arrangements.

Continue to pray for **David, Stephen, Ruth and Paul** – for God's comfort at this time of mourning and for his continued grace and presence in their lives and for Andrea's funeral on Monday.

Mission Partner Focus:
Pray for Open Doors – Save Syria.

<http://www.opendoorsuk.org/campaign/savesyria/pray.php>

For peace in that nation and for wisdom for world leaders

30 days of prayer -

http://www.opendoorsuk.org/pray/documents/PrayerDiary/2013/PrayerDiary_june.pdf

Thank you for your prayers for this church community!

Wednesday 11th Sept,
7.30pm, Homegroup
leaders' training.
8.30pm, whole church
prayer meeting...Please
come if you possibly
can...

INDIVIDUAL STUDY NOTES

Week beginning: 2nd Sept 2013

Worship/reflection:

Read together Psalm 23 and share one thing that this Psalm speaks to you about concerning God's love and provision.

Who we are, what we do – Forgiveness

Readings: Luke 23: 32-38 & Acts 9: 10-19

Jesus words 'Father forgive them...' are among the most famous words ever spoken, not least because they are so difficult to imagine anyone saying in the context. Jesus was being brutally prepared for crucifixion, one of the most horrific methods of execution ever designed. The pain was excruciating (literally, that is where this word comes from). In the midst of this He asks God to forgive 'them'.

Who is he speaking of?

There is no doubt His words apply to the Roman soldiers carrying out his execution. Although they were following orders and probably had no personal animosity towards Him. Perhaps His words also apply to those who were once His closest friends and disciples, yet now had betrayed, denied and deserted Him. Could they also have applied to those who conspired to have him killed, whether reluctantly, like Pilate, or with deliberate planning, like the High Priest and the Jewish ruling council? Our understanding of scripture leads us to believe that He was certainly addressing His prayer for forgiveness to all these people.

The extent to which they had knowingly and willingly acted to harm Him may have varied, but clearly they all contributed to His suffering, and in human terms it would have been understandable if He had not acted towards them in forgiveness. He had been wronged by them, of that there is no question. **Yet He chose to forgive them all.**

In fact our understanding of the cross is that His forgiveness extends to us too. We have all contributed to His suffering, as Peter wrote – ‘He bore our sins in His body on the tree.’ So that prayer ‘Father forgive them...’ includes us.

Perhaps this is the most fundamental of all truths about ‘who we are’ – **we are forgiven people.**

Does that mean we can simply carry on our lives knowing we have the ‘golden ticket’ of God’s forgiveness? Jesus evidently thought that being forgiven had implications – so much so that He taught us to pray: ‘forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.’ This is how forgiven people behave, and is a most challenging concept – consider what this sentence tells us:

- We can live as forgiven people
- BUT only to the extent that we forgive others
- What is being forgiven is sin – wrongdoing that we have done, but also that has been done to us
- The person we are forgiving has wronged us, of that there is no question
- We are suffering for the behaviour of others, yet, like Jesus, we, as forgiven people, are expected to forgive.

What we do: Acts 9: 10-19

Paul conversion was astounding and hard to overstate in terms of its impact. It would be like President Assad going to the United Nations to say that what he had done in his leadership of Syria had been wrong. Paul was the chief tormentor of the early church, he was their sworn enemy and he sought to destroy them, literally. Now God is telling one of them to go and pray for Paul who has become a Christian. Ananias is, naturally, somewhat sceptical!

But when Jesus forgives – He forgives! Paul had caused the Lord considerable suffering by persecuting His church, but if He could forgive, then so could Ananias. It is hardly surprising that in later life Paul was able to write ‘As the Lord has forgiven you so you also must forgive.’ The Lord always leads the way, but He expected Ananias, and He expects us, to follow.

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What do we do – we forgive those who have wronged us.

This next sentence may be one of the most challenging you will ever read:

‘Forgive’ is a verb, not a feeling.

If we wait until we feel like forgiving we will probably never do it – why on earth would we feel like forgiving someone who has wronged and hurt us? Jesus is not asking Ananias, or us to feel suddenly positive and warm towards those who have sinned against us – He is asking that we act in forgiveness. Forgiving is something we **do**, not necessarily something we feel.

Put yourself in Paul’s place – he suddenly realises that everything he has done has been misconceived, the very people he has sought to hurt and destroy are chosen by God. As he lives out his new found faith he will be rejected by all his old friends and the people he will most want to be with are the ones that have every reason to despise, hate and reject him. He believes Jesus has forgiven him, but what about Jesus’ followers. What must it have been like for Paul, blind and alone to hear those words of Ananias....‘Brother Saul...’ Brother.

These are words of forgiveness – did Ananias feel filled with affection for Paul – probably not, but he spoke the words that a forgiving person would speak, carried out the actions that a forgiving person would do, and obeyed Jesus, as someone who had himself experienced forgiveness.

We will never have to forgive someone more than Jesus has had to forgive us; if we are the slightest bit willing to try to forgive He is both willing and able to help us. The deal cannot be ‘change my feelings, then I will forgive’; it has to be ‘If you can forgive me, then I can try to forgive.’

We are forgiven people who, with the Lord’s help, can also be forgiving.

Study

Colossian 3:12-14 – consider how the Lord forgives us, what would He do in our situation?

Matthew 18: 20-22 – what would a church be like that applied this?

1 Corinthians 13, esp v5: ‘Love keeps no record of wrongs’ – how does this relate to forgiving?

Matthew 18: 23-35 – to what extent do we really take on board that God forgives AS we forgive others?