

“WE FORGIVE, GOD FORGETS”**Pastor Mike Corwin****TEXT: LUKE 6:27-38****GOD’S WORD: GENESIS 45:3-11, 15****I – NFL CELEBRATIONS:**

I don’t watch many professional sports on television. I love to go to the high school games and watch the local kids or one of my grandchildren compete. I like to watch college football when I’m home to watch (especially when OSU destroys Michigan Gary!). But I’m not into watching professional sports of any kind, not even football. Although the Browns got a little easier to watch this last season.

I don’t understand why I should watch a baseball game when all I see are a bunch of prima donna’s who seem to get upset at the slightest thing and clear the benches into a free for all in the middle of the field. Just the kind of sportsmanship I want to see our youth exposed to. Then there’s basketball which has turned into a full contact sport. Kicking, punching, elbowing, and even biting. It’s the UFC kickboxing league with a court instead of a ring.

But the one that really upsets me is professional football. It appears to me that each team must employ choreographers for their players as well as for the cheerleaders. Each receiver or running back who makes a touch down has some kind of a dance to do or gimmick they use to celebrate the achievement. They fall on the ground and do the worm. They get a camera out from under the goal post padding and take a picture. They line up and dance together. They obviously have to practice these spectacles all to mark the occasion. And this is the part that greatly twists my taters! Why do they do any of it? They are getting paid an exhorbant amount of money to play football and make touch downs and yet they seem to think that on top of the millions of dollars they get paid they are entitles to this little show. YOU GET PAID TO MAKE TOUCHDOWNS. YOU SHOULD NEED NOTHING ELSE!

II – FORGIVENESS:

And I see this same thinking when it comes to our Christianity. I sometimes am led to believe people act like Christians because they think there is a reward for their behavior. It’s this attitude that has led me to believe we should not put plaques of recognition on things. If people truly loved Jesus then they have all the recognition they need. More in heaven than I can ever give them here on earth. Yet I walk around Lakeside each year. A place where you would think we understand the principles of following Jesus and everywhere I look there is a brass plaque in memory of someone. Did they not know you loved them in life? It’s too late to tell them now with a piece of engraved metal. I love the one where it has a plaque in memory of someone at the base of a little tree. There’s even a wrought iron fence around it so you can’t touch this sacred tree!

I see this same way of thinking when it comes to forgiveness. We think people need to earn it, or that there must be great recognition for us to extend it. I hear various things s I do this work. Statements like “I can’t ever forgive them.” Yes you can...you just choose not to. Or – “They don’t deserve forgiveness.” Well I may full well agree with you but the fact of the matter is you are supposed to forgive them anyhow.

You see, there is no such thing as an unforgiving Christian. You can be unforgiving or you can be a Christian, you can’t be both. When Jesus taught us to pray he even taught us “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. He then explained that God forgives us the way we forgive others. This is a basic principle of being a follower of Jesus. It’s a mandate of your faith. You don’t have to associate with them. You don’t have to give them an award for best mother, father, son, daughter, employer, etc. You don’t have to send them a Christmas card...but you do have to forgive them. Jesus never asked us to forgive...he told us to forgive. And when you do you don’t get to spike your Bible and do a dance to celebrate it.

III – TEXT:

Jesus spoke about this in many ways and places in his ministry. One of them is in his sermon on the mount. Luke doesn’t give us all the parts of it as Matthew does, but he does expound upon a couple of the points Jesus made that are important to those who call Jesus Lord and follow him. In this morning’s text he develops this point of forgiveness much more than he did in the prayer he taught us.

Luke 6:27-38 (CEB)

²⁷ “But I say to you who are willing to hear: Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. ²⁸ Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If someone slaps you on the cheek, offer the other one as well. If someone takes your coat, don’t withhold your shirt either. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks and don’t demand your things back from those who take them. ³¹ Treat people in the same way that you want them to treat you.

³² “If you love those who love you, why should you be commended? Even sinners love those who love them. ³³ If you do good to those who do good to you, why should you be commended? Even sinners do that. ³⁴ If you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, why should you be commended? Even sinners lend to sinners expecting to be paid back in full. ³⁵ Instead, love your enemies, do good, and lend expecting nothing in return. If you do, you will have a great reward. You will be acting the way children of the Most High act, for he is kind to ungrateful and wicked people. ³⁶ Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate.

³⁷ “Don’t judge, and you won’t be judged. Don’t condemn, and you won’t be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you. A good portion—packed down, firmly shaken, and overflowing—will fall into your lap. The portion you give will determine the portion you receive in return.”

Jesus is well aware of the Old Testament teachings about an eye for an eye and how to take retribution for a wrong that is done to us. But he then tells them a radical interpretation of the Golden Rule. We don’t really treat others the way we want be treated anyway. We treat them based on how we have been treated.

But Jesus says let me give you some new ways to live. No matter how bad you have been treated you must love your enemies. You must love them no matter how nice they've been or if they will reciprocate or not. You must love them. Whether they harm you with their mouth and ugly words, or if they punch you in the jaw you must love them.

He even gives them a series of comparisons between the courtesies of believers and those of the world. Even sinners love people that love them. Even bad people like those who do something nice for them. Banks lend money with the expectation of getting paid but you should lend whether they have collateral of a payment book. If you get slapped around, don't retaliate – walk away. If they rob you of your coat – give them your shirt too. They may just be cold and you have more at home.

You're not doing any of it for recognition or repayment. You are acting this way because you are children of the Most High and those looking on are going to see God through your actions or lack thereof. You are called to show compassion and mercy just as your heavenly father does. God is he has shown you the example as he shows compassion and mercy even to the ungrateful and the wicked.

This passage isn't about passivity in the face of evil. It's about concern for another person. Someone who God may be working in their lives even as they commit their sin. It's a call to refrain from doing evil yourself and sometimes that means suffering evil. But that is the path Jesus has laid out for his followers.

And you won't get a plaque – but you will be rewarded for your kindness and according to this passage you will be rewarded abundantly.

And understand this. Where it says judge not or you will be judged. It's not talking about calling someone's sin to their attention. It's not telling them that what they're doing is OK if the Bible and teachings of Jesus say otherwise. We are supposed to make ethical evaluations and help people get on the right path. Maybe saying judge not is the wrong word. We may understand it better to say DO NOT CONDEMN. Meet their evil with love and try to steer them right. Let God do the judging.

IV – JOSEPH:

One of the best teachings on this subject that I know of is actually in the Old Testament. It's a story of forgiveness and trusting God's will. It's the story of Joseph. Joseph was the youngest son of Jacob. He was also Jacob's favorite. So much so that he got him a special coat of many colors. Joseph had a way of irritating his older brothers. He told them about his dreams and how they showed all of them bowing down and serving him. They got tired of this and when he went to check on them in the fields with Jacob's sheep one day they grabbed him and threw him in a cistern where they were going to leave him to die. They went back later and got him out of the cistern and sold him to some slave traders instead. They covered the coat in sheep blood and took it back to their father and led him to believe his youngest had been killed and devoured by wild animals.

Joseph ended up in Egypt where he was bought by the commander of pharaoh's royal guard and he ended up in charge of the man's house until his wife accused him of trying hanky-panky with her. He was thrown

into prison where he became the overseer of the whole jail. He was later brought to pharaoh for being able to interpret dreams and told the king how his dreams meant Egypt would have 7 years of good crops and plenty, followed by 7 years of famine. He ended up in charge of all Pharaoh's lands and stockpiled the grain so the people wouldn't die during those 7 bad years.

This famine also consumed the land of the Israelites and Jacob sent his sons to get grain from Egypt and they met with Joseph to make this happen. Joseph recognized his brothers immediately but they didn't recognize him in all his Egyptian garb. Through a series of events Joseph got grain to them but in a way they would have to keep coming back. Then you get to this passage we read this morning. He identified himself to them and they were speechless. They were this way because they were terrified of what they had done and the grudge he must hold. They had thrown him in a cistern to die. They had fished him out and sold him into slavery. He had wallowed in prison for many years. He had been completely shut off from his family and his culture. I'm guessing they had a right to be terrified. Most of us would say that Joseph had a right to call the Egyptian executioner and have them put to death in a slow and painful way. But that's not what we see happen.

But he didn't hate them, he didn't kill them, he kissed them and made arrangements to have them all move to Egypt. But it's the reasoning behind his forgiveness that we need to look at this morning. He forgave because he trusted in God and God's will. He trusted that he had been through everything he had suffered because God had a plan and that plan led to the survivor of his relatives and countless thousands other in the land of Egypt and surrounding places who would have died of starvation had it not been for Joseph being put in the place he was at the time he was.

V – YOU MUST FORGIVE:

So I guess you have to ask yourself have you been put into a situation that caused anger and hate and the yearning for revenge. I think most people have sometime in their lifetime. Maybe we need to stop and ask God what we can learn from it and see how God used it all for good.

Maybe we just need to follow Jesus and forgive without a bunch of thought or doubt. Maybe we'll never understand it or agree with it but we must do it.

Think of it this way. The pattern for our kindness is based on God's kindness to us. It says that God forgave us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8). He sent Jesus to die so we could be forgiven. He had every reason to hold a grudge against us. Had every reason to wash his hands of the whole lot of us. Instead...he met evil (us) with love (Jesus) and forgave us.

Here's the neat part. People think the Bible has a verse in it that says "Forgive and Forget." You won't find it there. It doesn't exist. We forgive but we remember. God sent Jesus and forgave us and says he remembers our sins no more. You see. It's our Job to Forgive ... it's God's job to Forget.

AMEN