

Series on Being Offended - Part Three 2018

We're at the end of three weeks on being offended and how to find some freedom from this trap, the emotional and spiritual and relational trap of constantly dealing with the implications of offense

I don't know about you...but if you have been here you are probably like me...there's a part of me that wants to move on to lighter topics...but I tell you, it's been a good journey for me

I've had a chance to really think and pray through some stuff...and when I think of what it means for me to imitate Jesus in my life...I thank God that I've been challenged to look at forgiveness in new ways...

Hope that has happened for you...

The bible is very clear - 1 John - hammers it again and again...the thermometer that measures our relationship with God is NOT what we expect it to be...or at least what we would hope it to be

Most people think private, religious activities show or demonstrate their desire to be close to the Lord - communion, bible reading, prayer, church attendance

But that's not the way the bible lays it out - one indicator of a growing relationship with God is our relationships with others...love for others

John says it, "If you say you love God but hate other people...something's wrong"

Jesus said, Luke 17, it is inevitable that offenses will come...or it is impossible to avoid them...these "scandalons" (Greek word for offense or stumbling blocks) are everywhere

These triggers for a trap...the bait that draws you and me in...that gets us stuck or trapped in a brutal and deadly cycle of bitterness and hurt

Jesus says we are going to be betrayed, angered and hurt - in this life the biggest issue is not if but what we do with that...how you and I respond to that hurt

So we've been calling this out...ask God to lead us in new ways...and it's happening

I love hearing from some of you as you are saying, "I'm choosing NOT to be offended"...that's awesome

It is a miracle of god when one relationship that is damaged gets healed

So good in fact...God knows we need each other - Genesis 2 "not good for man to be alone" - that was the ONE thing that God said was NOT good

So I think, in fact, I know that God smiles on the goodness of good relationships as He designed them to be experienced

Today - tie a ribbon on this series of talks...big subject...forgiveness

We better pray!

"Take your hand out of the cage monkey"

African tribe - that loves eating monkey meat...true...not my choice of food but apparently it is big in some places in the world

I had no idea of how they caught those things...did a little research:

- Tribesmen locate group of monkeys
- Then they set a cage on the ground under the tree that the monkeys are in-cage has four sides and a top but no bottom...it simply sits on the dirt
- There is no door to the cage but the bars or slats that make up the sides of the cage are spaced closely together
- Hunters take a stick then...put a piece of fruit on it and cover it in juice of that fruit the monkeys love and then hang it in the middle of the cage by a piece of string
- That sets the traps...then they wait
- Now monkeys are curious animals and sooner or later they are attracted to the trap...the monkeys look inside the cage and as their mouths water anticipating the fruit in the middle of the cage, they slowly reach their hand...now the monkey can't get the fruit and hand out of the cage...the monkeys hold on to the fruit and won't let go
- The next part is a bit cruel...but then the hunters come down and hit the monkey with a club...kill it and take it back to village for a happy meal or something like that
- Now what's interesting about this thing is this - are the monkeys really trapped?
- No - their hand is stuck because they won't let go of the fruit
- Hunters come toward them you would think they would let go...but they don't...they are trapped by their own decision

I love that metaphor; I guess...we take up offenses in the same way

Once we have a grip on a good offense...we hang on to it

Even though we may even realize how it leads us into harmful directions over time...we still choose to be trapped...when all of the time all we have to do to find peace is to simply LET GO!

Now you can say, "Robin you have no idea of what really happened...if you did, you would know that I can't let go"...but friend, that's not the way of Jesus...when we go through an offense the way of Jesus leads us to something called forgiveness

Colossians 3:12 - Paul...writing from prison near end of this life...summarizing some of the stuff he has stood for as a Jesus follower and leader of people:

"Therefore...clothe yourself with compassion..."

You can choose what clothes you wear right? You did that today...80 degrees I need to wear something cool...despite "fashion" of church

You can choose what to add or subtract from your wardrobe...right?

What if you woke up tomorrow and said, in addition to the right clothes, "God I'm going to wear some compassion today...some kindness...I'm going to wear some 'imitation of God' today

Bear with each other - forgive as the Lord has forgiven you...NOW, that's a powerful statement...

NOT if you can...or if you feel like it...or if it is convenient...or maybe 10 years from now...forgive as the Lord forgave you

Here's how it is - a person who can't forgive - they have forgotten what they have been forgiven of

Matthew 18:21 - big text for today - turn to it in bulletin

Now, if you are familiar with the bible - you know this text has to do with body discipline - if somebody has something against you, go to them...not go to five friends and talk about them...go to them

Well...there is more to that...but here's the kicker for today - Peter is hearing this - and as he's been listening, maybe he gets this magnanimous feeling...like, "Jesus I got this...I may not get a lot but I got this one"

So he says, Lord how many times do I have to forgive? 7 times

He's thinking - man I aced this test...law says "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth" and here I am saying I'll forgive and forgive 7 times!

Maybe he's waiting on Jesus to give him a gold star or something...but this is what Jesus does...read on

Jesus - 70 X 7 "homer Simpson" doh!

Peter - "that's impossible"

You know why he said that...same reason we would - we keep scorecards - we know every person who has offended us...we have our secret lists...and Jesus says we have to forgive - we look at the card - we look to Jesus - who or what do we usually ignore?

So Jesus knows what's happening - he decides to tell a story

We would call this a parable:

- Big debt - had to sell his entire family/possessions
- 10000 talents - 750,000 pounds of gold - 750,000 lbs. @ \$1000 oz. - 12 million ounces = 1.2 to the tenth power of debt - 1.2 with 10 zeros behind it
- A lot of money...the point that Jesus is making is that YOU CAN'T pay back a debt like that...Jesus only can
- In fact, that's why we sang, "Jesus paid it all"...good news of Jesus - he did

On cross - what Jesus did - that's the good news of the gospel - YOU are forgiven

- Story goes on - servant goes to choke guy who owes him 100 denarii
- Denarii worth about a days wage - do the math - 100 denarii about a third of a year's income - not peanuts

If average Monroe salary is \$69K, about \$20K debt - if someone owes you that much you probably want it to be paid back

- But guy throws other servant in prison - others see it and they are appalled...rat him out to the master
- NOW, here's Jesus and this story - he knows that there is NO comparison between the size of the debt

Jesus knows we have been forgiven

The Worst thing you can do to me is only a drop in the bucket to what we've done against God

Yes we've been hurt by others

But when Jesus is willing to forgive a HUGE unpayable debt and asks us why we can't do the same...we face a conundrum

Vs. 30 - the servant can't forgive as he was forgiven

Now, Jesus rarely does this in parables...usually he lets the point of the parable kind of slowly make its way into people's hearts...he doesn't explain much

But he does this time - so that NONE of his listeners or NONE of us will be mistaken

Can't apologize with just words...heart has got to be in it...forgive FROM THE HEART

If you can't forgive...then you can't be forgiven

That's huge - is Jesus questioning a person's salvation? I don't know...that's His business

What I do know is this - if you and I have experienced the grace of God - we are called to forgive as we have been forgiven

We have to LET GO - release our right to make the other person pay for their offense or hurt

Now, what keeps you and me from letting go? Why is it so hard to forgive?

A number of reasons:

1 - we sense that if we forgive we are essentially admitting that the problem isn't a big deal

2 - we sense that if we forgive we will have to start saying nice things about the person who hurt us

3 - we sense that if we forgive the other person will get that they can continue to offend or hurt us again and again

Friends all those things are NOT forgiveness

Yes we let go...we need to let go - but forgiveness is a serious move based upon what Jesus did for us

Forgiveness understands the magnitude of hurt...it does not give license to the other person to hurt us again and again...and it doesn't necessarily or automatically lead to reconciliation

You see, reconciliation in a relationship happens with a FIRST STEP of forgiveness but only really happens when another step is taken...a step that sets a new contract or new covenant in that relationship

By the way, need to stop here for a minute and make sure you understand a couple of things:

1 - If you forgive it doesn't mean you are facilitating bad behavior - you aren't saying that what the other person doing is OK

2 - if you have an addict in your life who keeps hurting you, yes, you read that right, God calls you to forgive...again and again...that's tough part of being in relationship with an addict

3 - but understand...forgiving somebody does not mean that you keep allowing yourself to be abused - you have to set limits, boundaries...you have to say NO and deal with the reality of the relationship

All you are doing is saying I forgive you..I'm letting go of the anger and need for revenge that will ONLY DO ME HARM...that's what you hare letting go of...the implications of holding on to anger and hurt ON YOU and YOUR heart and life

4 - Now what if the person who hurt you never apologizes? What if they don't feel bad about the offense? What if they are dead?

My dad story

Remember, this forgiveness stuff is your call...hold on to the fruit or not

Here's a question to consider - when did Jesus forgive you? Before/after you said you were sorry?

Remember what Jesus said on the CROSS 2000 years ago? "Father, forgive them..."

Forgive as you have been forgiven...forgive as an expression of your gratitude to Jesus

Here's another question - big one - hold on - would you want God to forgive you the way you forgive others?

Exercise to pass out - you have a list - I do too - people we've offended or people who have offended us

Give your scorecard to Jesus

Mark 11:24 - two things - believe and it will be yours - and when you pray for that, forgive ...as you stand before Lord to receive His grace, give it!

Forgiveness is about YOU having a new lease on life...giving you emotional freedom...breaking the destructive walls of bitterness

You see...the gift of forgiveness is not just about giving a gift to another - giving yourself a gift