

Forgiveness

Sermon - July 4, 2021

Scripture: Matthew 18:21-35

Golden Verse: *“And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.”*
Matthew 6:12

We continue to study the Lord’s Prayer this morning, which has so many messages for us. Today I would like to highlight only one message from this: “And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.”

We have to notice that our Lord Jesus Christ combines praying for daily forgiveness with praying for daily bread.

So far, the sentences in the Lord’s Prayer were separated with a comma. “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

And now between the next two sentences, there is the word AND which combines two sentences: give us this day our daily bread AND forgive us our sins. So we may say: Give us this day our daily bread AND forgive us our sins daily. The way our Lord is teaching us this prayer, our Lord emphasizes that our daily bread is as essential as the daily forgiveness, or vice versa: the daily forgiveness is as essential for us as the daily bread.

If a person is unable to get enough food for a few days, his body will deteriorate and not being nurtured, will be destroyed.

Likewise, if a person does not know how to apologize, how to ask for forgiveness, or how to forgive, his good sense about love, peace, and joy will disappear, and slowly his whole soul will be destroyed. If in a marriage, a family, amongst friends, amongst co-workers, there is no willingness to apologize and they are unable to forgive, that community is dysfunctional, and sooner or later will be easily destroyed. Therefore, our Lord emphasizes with this conjunction that forgiveness is a **condition of life, a major necessity of life**, just like daily bread.

Let me give you a metaphorical example, so we might always remember this. God created us to be on two feet in order to balance our bodies and to be able to walk straight. In this regard, one of our feet is the daily bread, and the other of our feet is the daily forgiveness.

No matter how strong a person is physically, how smart or intelligent, how rich or wealthy, if the person never learned how to apologize and how to forgive, that person’s life has absolutely no value.

In Mark 8:36, Jesus said: *“What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”* No matter how much wealth is in a family, how many cars

they have, and how much money they own, if there is no apology and no forgiveness, they cannot really enjoy what they have. People will feel reluctant around this type of people and won't be eager to be around them, or to make a closer relationship with them.

Our human weakness separates us from each other and separates us from God. However, sincere apologies and forgiveness reconnects us bringing us together again and making us ONE.

Deep in our hearts, we always desire to be ONE with those we love: our spouses, children, close relatives, and best friends. Even those people who seem to have the hardest hearts, often suffer from being separated from someone with whom they want to be one with. The price of this unity is sincere apology and sincere forgiveness. It is sad that there are so many people who would rather harden their hearts and pay the price of dissolving a unity, instead of humbling themselves to apologize and/or to forgive.

Let us stop here for a bit, and ask from ourselves: is it still so difficult to apologize and to forgive? Is it easier to pay the price of our stubborn hearts?

Let us recognize that, to apologize sincerely and to forgive, doesn't cost us anything. Is it really so hard to say: please don't be angry with me; I did not want to this; I did not mean what I said; it was not my intention to hurt you; I don't want to do or say this again? In this case, the other person should forgive from the bottom of his/her heart, and should say: I understand, I am deeply hurt, and I don't think I deserve this, but I will work hard on my feelings to forgive you, to put this behind me again, and I will do my very best not to throw this in your face. Let's start a new relationship again. That is all that should be said honestly and practiced.

Sadly, most people are full of constant accusations. They blame their partners, their children, their parents, their friends, the weather, the circumstances, everything and everyone. They find it hard to apologize and they are easy to excuse themselves. As they accuse others, they are filled with pride and self-righteousness. As they accuse and hurt others, they cannot find a way out of their behaviour.

If we want to pray honestly this sentence of the Lord's prayer - "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us", we have to honestly see our weaknesses and we have to condemn this type of negative behaviour in us. We have to talk to those whom we were hurting. We have to listen carefully to each other. We have to notice our mistakes. Healing always begins when we are able to recognize our mistakes and we apologize towards that person we were hurting. We should do this before the other person would start to tell us in which way we were wrong and how we hurt them.

Where we recognize our sin and apologize, we have a chance to get forgiveness. This is what Jesus encourages us to do. This type of behaviour has to characterize us, the children of God, so that we can sincerely bow down in the presence of our Father, every day asking for His forgiveness.

There is another mistake we often do. We like to generalize our mistakes, when we pray: Forgive us our sins. But instead of just generalizing, in our private prayer we have to name the mistakes we committed, one by one. I know that it would hurt us. We have to say for what we apologize TODAY, what we did today, what we missed, what we said, the way we said it, what we thought TODAY. This humble behaviour and action will result in an increased spiritual sensitivity, which will bring us every evening in the presence of our Heavenly Father to ask for the necessary forgiveness for that day. This can happen in a few minutes. Here, the quantity of the time is not important, but the quality of our spirit, which will create in us inner peace, happiness, and joy. In this way, we will rejoice as the children of God. Dear beloved, we have to learn to come daily to our Heavenly Father, and to stand daily next to the other person whom we have offended.

It is no coincidence that Paul says in Ephesians 4:26-27, *“In your anger do not sin; do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.”* This sentence begins like this: be angry, It would be better not to be angry, but it comes with our daily human weaknesses and struggles. We run into each other every day. We will inevitably go against each other. We don't want to, but we hurt each other. Often we don't have the time to discuss it right there, who was wrong and who was right, who has to apologize and who has to forgive. We are all the same. We are humans, we are weak and we all make mistakes. It may happen during the day, that we confront, but we have to give five minutes to each other in the evening to peacefully apologize and the sun will not go down in our anger. We should not go to sleep with our sins. If we have done something wrong against those we love, or at least we want to love, but unwillingly we were hurting them, we have to forgive and forget things. Unfortunately, often we forget what we said or what we did, and this is why we don't ask for forgiveness. This is why the other person cannot forgive us and forget.

We should say things like: I wanted to do something differently. I am sorry.

We have to give each other a chance to do something better tomorrow and we should forgive each other wholeheartedly.

We have to learn to stand side by side in this way, and we have to be ready to forgive.

If someone does not want to apologize, it is not easy to forgive in our hearts. Our Lord says, that just as difficult as it is for us to forgive those who sin against us, we

can imagine how difficult it was for the Father to forgive us so many sins. It is not easy at all to forgive from our hearts the others who have sinned against us and did not even apologize.

We, as God's children, should not wait for others to ask forgiveness from us first, but we should have a heart to forgive in advance, knowing that God has already forgiven us, because we have already received so much forgiveness from our Father.

Many times we see that our faith is poisoned by someone hiding anger. People are looking for revenge; all the bitterness groomed within ourselves are like infections that may be small, but very dangerous. For this, we have get rid of bitterness. Many times people don't know why they are bitter, but they still hold life-threatening bitterness, anger, revenge within their hearts.

Let us consider carefully what we read in Hebrews: *"See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."* Hebrew 12:15

Bitterness can do that. This is why it is such an important request, that just as we ask our Father over and over again for the daily bread and all that we saw last Sunday that fall under it, so we also learn to ask daily forgiveness from each other and forgive each other. Amen