

The Resurrection Brings Forgiveness

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As we near the end of the school year, there are always a lot of traditions that go on. There are graduations, there are clap-outs, there are dances, there are proms. I'm being told by my kids that STAAR testing is always a fun tradition at the end of the school year.

But one thing you don't see as much anymore is senior pranks, right? You just don't see those happening as much anymore. I'm sure it's because some things can go tragically, tragically wrong.

We saw that recently, if you follow the news, over in Georgia. Jason Hughes was a high school math teacher there. Everything I've read about him has been amazing. He was a great husband, a great dad, loved by the community, loved by the kids in the school, and loved by the parents of the kids he taught. I mean, he truly does seem like an all-around incredible guy.

During senior prank week at his school, there were a couple of seniors who were going to wrap his yard with toilet paper. You don't see that very often anymore either. But he's a good sport, right? He's a fun teacher. He's playing along. He knows it's coming, and he lets it happen.

As the kids are wrapping up, he has fun with it. He opens the door, chases after them, and just sort of makes it a moment for them. As he gets closer to them, an unimaginable accident happens. He trips over the curb and falls into the street as the kids are pulling away in their cars. An 18-year-old driving away from a fun little senior prank hit and killed Jason Hughes right there in front of his house.

In an instant, everything changes. His wife has now lost her husband. They're young. They've got two little kids who have just lost their dad. What happens now? Those boys with that prank - I mean, this is with them now, right? In fact, the driver of the car was arrested and charged with vehicular homicide.

In the days following the accident, Jason's widow, Laura, spoke up. She went to the police station and asked that the police drop all the charges against that student. She chose to forgive him.

I want you to think about that for a minute. Put yourself in her shoes. Her husband is gone. The father of her children is gone. Life is completely different from what she expected. What would it take? What would it take going on in your heart to step up and offer forgiveness like that?

Many people go the opposite route. Many choose to be bitter and to want pain for the people who have caused them pain. But she took a completely different route by choosing to forgive, and it made a statement, right? It was a big, big deal to everyone in her community.

The family of the teenager who was forgiven thanked Laura, let me quote them, "for her remarkable compassion and spirit of forgiveness in the face of the tremendous and tragic loss of her husband."

She forgave.

When I read that story, when I first heard about it and followed it for a little bit, and then saw that Laura asked for the charges to be dropped and chose forgiveness, something stirred inside of me. When we hear stories of radical forgiveness like this, I believe it stirs something inside all of us. I believe that's because, as Christians, we know what it's like to be forgiven.

Forgiveness is foundational to our faith. The Bible tells us that Jesus went to the cross, died, and rose so that we could be forgiven. Forgiveness is a big, big deal. This morning we're going to see that, through the resurrection of Jesus, you and I can have forgiveness.

If you've been with us for several weeks now, you know we're in a series that stems from Easter: So what? Why does the resurrection of Jesus matter? We've seen that the resurrection brings hope for today, tomorrow, and forever. We've seen that the resurrection brings clarity and understanding to the Scripture and to our daily lives. We've seen that the resurrection brings peace.

This morning, if you take notes, we're going to see that the resurrection brings forgiveness.

Peter's Denial

If you've got your Bible, open up to John chapter 21. We're going to see an incredible story and picture of forgiveness here. As you're turning, I want to give you a little bit of context.

In John 21, Jesus and Peter are going to have a conversation. To really get it, you need to know what happened before Jesus went to the cross.

Peter was one of the disciples, right? He's the loud guy. He's the bold guy. He's the brash guy, the brave guy, the outgoing guy. He's the one who first declared that Jesus was the Christ. He's the only one who jumped out of the boat and walked on the water by faith over to Jesus. As Jesus was being arrested, he's the one who pulled out the sword and tried to defend Jesus back in the garden. That's his personality.

With that in mind, I want you to think about the Last Supper, the night Jesus would eventually be arrested. He's up there in the room with His disciples. They are sharing in the Passover meal, celebrating it like God had instructed them to do.

In that moment, Jesus is teaching and talking to them. He tells them a little bit about when He's going to be arrested and go to the cross. He talks about the resurrection. They're not putting two and two together yet. They don't quite get it.

Jesus makes this statement. He says, "Hey, listen, guys. Where I'm going, you're not going to be able to follow Me."

In typical Peter spirit, he says, "I can follow You, and I will follow You. In fact, I would be willing to lay down my

life for You."

Jesus says in John 13:38:

Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.

— John 13:38

Jesus tells Peter, "Peter, you're not going to follow Me. In fact, before morning tomorrow, you're going to deny Me three times."

Shortly after that, Judas betrays Jesus. Jesus is arrested, and His trials begin. Immediately that evening, He goes to trial.

Peter does follow after Jesus. He gets close. He gets into the courtyard of Caiaphas, the high priest's house. The Bible says he's warming himself around a fire. A little servant girl comes up to Peter and says, "Wait a minute. I think you might be one of Jesus' disciples."

He answers her with three words: "I am not."

A few minutes later, around the same fire, somebody else walks up to him and says, "Hey, wait a minute. I think I've seen you before when Jesus has been teaching. Aren't you one of His followers? Do you know Him?"

Three words: "I am not."

Finally, around the fire one more time, someone says, "Wait. We were there in the garden tonight when Jesus was arrested, and we saw you with Him. Aren't you one of the disciples?"

Once again, Peter denies it.

Luke captures that third denial of Christ really, really well. I want you to feel the weight of what's going on in Peter's mind and heart right now:

But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times."

And he went out and wept bitterly.

— Luke 22:60-62

Just feel that. Jesus is on trial for His life. You and I have read the rest of the story. We know about Easter. We know about the resurrection. Peter doesn't know any of that yet. All Peter knows is that, in the most vulnerable moment Jesus has had, strong, bold, brave, brash Peter is scared to admit that he even knows who Jesus is.

Put yourself in Peter's position as you're running out of that courtyard, weeping bitterly. Imagine the emotions you're going to have to carry. Imagine the guilt and the shame you're going to carry from that moment.

I don't know how you process this kind of stuff, but for me, that rooster crowing would be on repeat in my mind, right? It would go over and over again. I would hear that rooster crow. I would be taken right back to my words. I would think about that look from Jesus, and I would think about what I'd done. I would think about the guilt of the moment. I would think about the shame of the moment. It would be really, really tough to get past.

I'm sure it was for Peter as well.

Jesus Forgives and Restores Peter

That takes us to our chapter today, John 21. We don't have any recorded conversations between Peter and Jesus from the Last Supper all the way until now. The denial has happened. This abandonment has happened, and they have not yet had a moment to come back together again.

They will.

At the beginning of John 21, the disciples are out fishing. Many of these guys were professional fishermen before they laid down their nets and followed after Jesus to become His disciples. They're fishing again, and they have fished all night long without one fish in the boat.

Now, I'm not a professional fisherman. I'm an amateur fisherman. I really, really enjoy it. My kids really enjoy it. My wife tolerates us when we go out and try to enjoy it. I'm telling you, as an amateur fisherman who spends a lot of time out there and does a lot of work, if we don't have any fish in the boat, it is a very, very frustrating day. We're on edge. We're cranky. It's frustrating not to catch the fish you're trying to catch.

These guys are professionals. They are frustrated with their lack of success.

Jesus yells out from the shore. They don't know it's Jesus. They can't see that far, and they haven't been having ongoing interactions with Him since He rose from the dead on that first Easter Sunday morning. He calls out from the shore and says, "Have you guys caught anything?"

Let me just tell you, if you yelled that from the shore today, like down in Galveston, it doesn't matter whether they've caught anything or not. They would lie and say they caught a lot, right? That's just how fishermen are.

These guys, though, back then - I guess it was a different day. Fishermen were honest. They said, "No, we haven't caught anything."

Jesus yells from the shore. Remember, they don't know it's Jesus. He says, "The fish are just on the other side of the boat. Why don't you throw your net on the other side of the boat, and you'll catch some fish?"

I guarantee you there are eye rolls in that boat. "Are you kidding me? We're on the water. We see the water. We know what's going on. What is this guy doing?"

But they threw it on the other side of the boat anyway, and they caught so many fish they were not strong enough to bring them in. They had to call other boats over, saying, "Guys, we've got too many. We need your help. Come get it."

In that moment, they knew. That's not some random guy on the shore. This is Jesus. This is a miracle. Only Jesus could have done that.

Peter does what Peter always did. He makes the boat move. He dives out of the boat, leaves his buddies to handle the fish, and swims all the way into shore. All he knew was that he had to be with Jesus.

When he got there, Jesus was ready for him. The fire was warm. Breakfast was on the way, and that paved the way for the conversation they had together.

Look with me at John 21, starting in verse 15:

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"

— John 21:15

This is the first conversation since the denials and the rooster crowed, and what does Jesus ask? "Do you love Me more than these?"

More than what? If you're going to read the text, you've got to think through things like this. More than what? "Do you love Me more than what?"

I read one commentary this week that said Jesus was asking Peter, "Do you love Me more than the fish we're about to eat for breakfast?" That was one out of about a hundred commentaries. Everybody else says that guy is way wrong, right? That's not what Jesus is asking.

He's saying, "Peter, do you love Me more than these other guys do? Because I know what you said, and I know what you did. I'm asking you now. This is your chance to declare it. Do you love Me or not?"

What's Peter saying?

"Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."

— John 21:15

He's not talking about livestock. He's talking about people, meaning His followers. He's instructing Peter to act like a shepherd would. He's giving Peter the responsibility of feeding His sheep, feeding followers of Jesus with the teachings of Jesus and the words of Jesus.

Even after that betrayal, even after that sin, He is giving Peter responsibility and purpose.

But it doesn't stop there. Look at verse 16:

He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."

He said to him, "Tend my sheep."

— John 21:16

Purpose and trust once again. But Jesus doesn't stop there. He keeps pushing.

He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

— John 21:17

By the time Jesus asks the third time, Peter's heart is beginning to hurt. He's got to be thinking back to the rooster. He's got to be thinking back to that look from Jesus. It is clicking now. "I denied Jesus three times. Three times He's asking me now if I love Him or not."

Look at the answer: "Lord, You know everything. You know everything. You know that I love You."

This is a beautiful morning by the lake between Jesus and Peter. I want you to hear and see this: Peter's failure did not mean that his story was over. Jesus forgives, and Jesus restores.

Three times they have this conversation. In that forgiveness, Jesus is saying, "I've got a job for you. I have purpose for you. I can count on you. You're going to be pivotal in the kingdom of God. I am not holding that moment against you. I'm forgiving you, Peter."

We've got grief and repentance from Peter. We've got forgiveness from Jesus. That forgiveness was only extended to Peter because Jesus is alive. The same forgiveness extended to Peter that day on the shore by the Sea of Galilee is extended to you and me as well.

Louie Giglio is a great speaker, pastor, and author. He's in the Atlanta area. He's the man behind the Passion Conferences, along with his wife, Shelley. Those conferences have been going on for years and years and years, and college students and young adults go to them.

He's got this phrase that's always rolling around in my head. I heard it years ago. It's just always in there in one way or another, and it's so true of what we see here with Peter. It's true of every single person in this room. Louie says it like this: "It is never too late, and you are never too far gone."

It's never too late, and you are never too far gone.

If you're here today and you've messed up, if you're here today and you've thought, "There's no hope for me. I've done too much. I've sinned too much. What I've done is too bad. I've rejected the Lord for far too long. God could never love me with all the junk I have going on in my life," let me encourage you.

We see right here that we have a Savior who loves us and forgives us. That's what the cross is all about. That's what the resurrection is all about. It's all about the forgiveness God is extending to us because of His great love for us.

With the rest of our time this morning, I want to unpack forgiveness to make sure we have a firm grasp on the forgiveness God has offered us in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Forgiveness Makes Us Right With God

Above all else, we need to understand that because Jesus rose, we have forgiveness now that makes us right with God. There is a forgiveness available to you and me that makes us right with God.

We call that salvation. We call it getting saved. We call it becoming a follower of Jesus. We call it becoming a child of God. Whatever phrase you want to use, there's a forgiveness available that makes us right with God.

Because Jesus died and rose, the Bible teaches that when we place our faith in Him and Him alone, by grace through faith, our sins are forgiven. In that moment, our position before God changes. We become children of God right then and there.

A common mistake people make is assuming that, when God forgives us, He is letting our sin slide or overlooking our sin. That's not forgiving sin. That is ignoring sin. God doesn't do that. God is holy and just. That would be against His character and His nature.

In fact, the Bible tells us:

For the wages of sin is death.

— Romans 6:23

That means that, with our sin, we earn spiritual death. We earn separation from God. That's a great way to remember that language in the Bible. When you read things like, "The wages of sin is death," you can look at death as separation. It is separation from God.

Our sin, we read, creates a debt that we cannot pay. Here's the beautiful news of the gospel: God did not ignore our debt. God paid it Himself.

Jesus stepped out of heaven. He came to earth, and what did He do? He paid the price for our sins. That sin that deserves death, Jesus took it on Himself.

Second Corinthians 5:21 says:

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

— 2 Corinthians 5:21

That's saying God put our sin on Jesus so we could experience the righteousness of God.

When we talk about God forgiving us, it's critical that we understand God is not looking at me or you and pretending our sin did not happen. God is not lowering His standard. The price has been paid. Our debt has been cleared by His own Son, Jesus, who died on the cross.

Here's the second half of Romans 6:23:

But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

— Romans 6:23

Sin leads to death, separation from a holy God. Jesus, on the other hand, leads to life, a relationship with God.

Ephesians 1:7 says:

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.

— Ephesians 1:7

Forgiveness, salvation, being made right with God - it comes when we trust Jesus as our Savior. In that moment, our position before God changes. We become His children. We are forgiven. The sins are gone and completely removed.

Listen to some of these verses throughout the Bible that tell us that very thing.

Second Corinthians 5:17 says:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

— 2 Corinthians 5:17

Psalms 103:12 tells us:

*As far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.*

— Psalm 103:12

If you're trying to separate east and west, the number is infinity, right? That's how far God removes our sin from us.

In Hebrews 8:12, God says:

For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.

— Hebrews 8:12

Colossians 3:3 says:

For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

— Colossians 3:3

That means when God looks at us, He sees the righteousness of Christ. He doesn't see the sins of our past.

Romans 8:1 is similar:

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

— Romans 8:1

Think about all this. When we trust in Christ, when we're forgiven, when we experience the forgiveness available only in Him, we become His children. We're made completely new. Our sins are gone. God doesn't

remember them anymore.

Why? God doesn't forget. What happened? Jesus paid the price, and the debt we owed is now cleared.

Think about debts in your own life. Think about financial debt in your life. What do you do when the debt is cleared? Move on, right?

Somebody in the first service said, "You say amen."

I was like, "Yeah. You say amen, and you move on."

You don't keep paying it, do you? Have you ever taken out a loan for a car, had a car payment, and hit that day when you paid the last bill on your car payment? They're mailing you the title, and the debt is cleared. When that happened, did you continue to send money to the bank every month?

Did you think, "You know what? I've been doing this for so long, it just seems right. I know the debt is paid. I know it's been cleared. I want to keep sending the money. It just feels like something I have to do"?

Anybody done that? Of course you haven't. Why would you? It's ridiculous. It wouldn't even cross our minds.

So many of us do that with our sin, though. Jesus cleared the debt. He paid the price. We're forgiven. I just read you seven or eight verses that show He doesn't hold on to our past. He makes us new.

I want to encourage you this morning: If you're holding on to past sin, shame, guilt, or regret, you're holding on to a debt that God has already cleared. Don't hold on to something God has removed.

When you allow past sins in your life to paralyze your life today, when we refuse to forgive ourselves like God has forgiven us, think about what we're saying. We're saying the price Jesus paid wasn't good enough. We're saying the price Jesus paid on the cross wasn't enough to forgive us.

Listen, don't hold on to what God has already forgiven.

Paul writes to the church in Corinth:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins.

— 1 Corinthians 15:3

First importance. This is above all. It's of first importance. Christ died for our sins.

Listen: Because Jesus died and Jesus rose, when you trust in Him, your sins are forgiven. You're made right with God. You are a child of God. Hold on to that. Understand who you are in Christ.

Forgiveness in Our Daily Lives

The second aspect of forgiveness we need to understand is that there is forgiveness in our daily lives as well.

Here's the reality. As children of God, forgiven by God, I hope this doesn't offend you, but you're not perfect. You are going to continue to mess up. I am going to continue to mess up. We are going to fall into sin.

When that happens, we've got to come before God, confess that sin, and ask for forgiveness. Jesus tells us that, doesn't He? Think about the Lord's Prayer. What does He say?

*Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

— Matthew 6:12

Jesus teaches us to pray in our relationship with God, asking for forgiveness for the things that go on in our lives.

First John 1:9 says:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

— 1 John 1:9

When we know we've sinned and confess it, we're agreeing with the Lord. We're saying, "God, we're wrong. You're right. We know we've gone our way, not Your way. We are sorry. We know Your way is better."

Now, don't misunderstand me. When we become children of God at salvation, we just talked about this. The debt is paid. We're made new. There's no undoing that.

When we mess up as His children - and we will - He doesn't toss us out of the family. He does not disown us. We are still His children. But that sin disrupts the intimacy and fellowship we have with God.

Think about a father and son. Think about a parent and child or a grandparent and child. Many of you are parents or grandparents. If your kid messes up and clearly, deliberately disobeys you, you don't stop loving them. You don't disown them. You don't kick them out of your family. You are always in their corner. You are always there for them.

But until there's a moment of confession, repentance, and asking forgiveness, when the kid apologizes and the parent forgives, there's going to be a strain in the relationship. There's an awkwardness, maybe a little bit of frustration. Maybe the joy that was once there is just not firing like it used to be. There's got to be that moment of reconciliation.

That's why, when we confess our sins to God, we're not trying to get back into the family. We're not trying to become His children once again. That is settled, right? Colossians 3 says your life is hidden with Christ in God. That is locked down.

But in our own hearts, we're cleansing that sin and restoring the fellowship we have with Him once again.

There's a phrase that's been around forever. It's not mine. I'd love to give credit, but I just don't know who originally said it: "Purity paves the way to intimacy."

Purity in your relationship with God paves the way to intimacy with God. When you are walking in purity, when you are walking free from sin in your life, there is a different kind of fellowship and joy that we have with our

heavenly Father.

Everyone who has walked with Jesus has experienced this at one point or another. If you've been walking with Jesus for some time, you know that when you slip into sin, there is a difference in your heart. There is a change in your heart. There may be a hardness to your heart and a frustration in that relationship with God.

That's why it's important to experience forgiveness in our daily lives. Confess your sins. First John 1:9 says to confess your sins. He's faithful. He'll forgive them and restore that fellowship once again.

We Are Called to Forgive Others

Here's the amazing thing: Because God has forgiven us, and because God will continue to forgive us when we mess up, He allows us to forgive others as well.

That's the third aspect of forgiveness we need to lean into this morning. We are called to forgive others.

We are children of God. We reflect the heart, nature, and character of God. Here's what that means: When people wrong us, our call is forgiveness.

For many of you right now, there's a good chance the Holy Spirit is bringing someone to your mind. It's someone you know you need to forgive, someone you might be holding a grudge against right here, right now.

As the Lord is bringing that person to your mind, there's a chance you're pushing back and saying, "No, no. I don't want to think about it. I don't want to do it."

I just want to encourage you: Listen to the Word this morning, and forgive.

Colossians 3:13 says:

Bear with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgive each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

— Colossians 3:13

Ephesians 4:32 says:

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

— Ephesians 4:32

You might be thinking, "You don't know what they did to me."

I don't know what they did to you. But I do know what Christ has done for you. He has made you completely new. He's made you His child. I know that, as His child, we're going to look more and more like our heavenly Father.

Think about Jesus on the cross. People are driving nails through His hands. What does He say about them to God? "Father, strike them down and get Me out of here"?

No.

Jesus says, "Father, forgive them. They're putting nails in My hands. Forgive them, God. They're mocking Me. They're putting a crown of thorns on My head. Father, forgive them."

That's the picture we have in Christ.

I mentioned Laura Hughes earlier. Her husband was killed in that accident. I don't know her. I don't know about her relationship with Jesus. But I do know that the way she was able to forgive is a picture of the forgiveness we're called to extend to others as Christians.

Please understand: Forgiven people forgive people.

To be clear, that doesn't mean we allow people who hurt us to continue hurting us. We can forgive them from the heart, as God has called us to, while keeping those who would hurt us at a distance.

Forgiveness does not mean allowing abuse back into our lives. There are some scenarios where we absolutely have to set up biblical, godly, healthy boundaries to keep ourselves safe. Don't misunderstand forgiveness in those scenarios. It doesn't necessarily mean inviting a person back into our lives.

But it will bring the peace of God back into our lives, and we absolutely need it.

As a pastor, I've talked to so many people over the years who have struggled with bitterness. They truly were wronged. They were wronged by someone. They were hurt by someone. But rather than forgiving as God in Christ has forgiven us, they continued to carry a grudge. They've held on to bitterness, and they've allowed that bitterness into their heart. It slowly creeps into every area of their lives.

You've heard the phrase before: Holding a grudge or being bitter toward someone is like drinking poison and hoping the other person gets sick.

That's what happens when we refuse to forgive.

In fact, based on what we've read this morning, when we refuse to forgive, what are we doing? We are living in opposition to the Word of God. We are living in sin. That sin will negatively impact every area of our lives, including our own relationship with our heavenly Father.

Choose to forgive.

You might wonder, practically, what does that look like? "Okay, how do I get there? How do I do it?"

What did God do for us? He cleared the debt. He cleared the debt, right?

Sometimes when we're wronged by people, this natural reaction wells up. Here's what we think: "Because they did this to me, or because they did that to me, they owe me. They owe me. It's up to them. They've got to do something for me now in order to make it right."

When we forgive them, we're releasing that. "You don't owe me." We're forgiving it.

There's a great author, Thomas Watson. He wrote on forgiveness, and he understands there are people who want to forgive but aren't sure what it's going to look like in their lives. He wrote out a definition and included

some practical steps. I've got a list of them for you this morning.

As we forgive, here's what it's going to look like in our lives.

First, we're going to resist revenge. If we've forgiven somebody, we're not going after them.

Second, we're going to wish them well. We're going to wish them well in their lives. We're going to hope they walk with the Lord and that things go well with them.

Third, we're going to grieve when they hurt. A great heart check for us to know whether we've truly forgiven is what happens when we hear about the person who hurt us. If we hear about a moment when they are hurting and we sort of celebrate that, we haven't forgiven them in our hearts yet. We just haven't. But if we grieve when they're hurt, that's a sign that there's been some healing and some forgiveness in our hearts.

Fourth, we pray for them.

We seek to do our part to live in peace with them. It takes two, but we're going to do our part to live in peace.

Finally, when they need help, we're going to extend it.

Just practically speaking, if you're wondering what forgiveness looks like with the person who has wronged you, when we get there, we know that's a pretty good indicator that our heart is in a place of forgiveness.

Charles Spurgeon wrote about forgiveness, and I love what he said: "To be forgiven is such sweetness that honey is tasteless in comparison. But there is one thing sweeter still, and that is to forgive."

Forgive as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Our God is so good to us with this. Peter dives out of the boat. He goes to the shore. He's not sure what to expect or how Jesus is going to receive him. They have not talked since that betrayal. Peter is carrying around guilt. He's carrying around shame, abandonment, and betrayal.

Again, we've been there. I've messed up. You've messed up.

But when we read this, we see Jesus bringing Peter in. We see forgiveness. We see restoration. We see purpose. We see a sweet moment and a reminder that our God is a forgiving God.

It is never too late. You are never too far gone.

He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to die on a cross and rise again. Thank God for the forgiveness that's available in Christ.

Invitation

Would you bow with me this morning?

As we bow our heads, here's what I know. I know every person is in a different place this morning in their life and in their walk with Christ. But I want to encourage all of us, no matter where we are or what's going on, to

offer up this simple prayer to the Lord: "Father, thank You for the forgiveness that's available because of Jesus."

Just thank Him for that this morning. "Thank You for the forgiveness that's available because of Jesus."

Now I want you to make it more personal.

If you're here today and you know you're not right with God, that you have never trusted in Jesus as your Savior, and you know you're not a child of God because you've never looked by grace through faith to the work of Jesus on the cross, I want to encourage you. In just a minute, when we stand and sing, we're going to have pastors down here. Make your way forward and say, "Listen, I'm ready to trust in Jesus as my Savior." We'll answer any questions you have and help you do just that.

Maybe you're in a different place with forgiveness. You are a child of God, but you've got sin in your life that you're allowing to affect more and more and more of your life. I want to encourage you this morning: Do what we read in 1 John 1:9. Confess that sin to the Lord. Agree with Him, saying, "God, I know this is wrong. I know this isn't what You've called me to. God, I know Your way is better. God, forgive me."

Confess that to Him this morning. Do not carry around sin in your heart and in your life.

Maybe you're at a place today where you've been hurt. You're having a hard time forgiving. I understand, and I want to gently encourage you to do what God has called you to do. In the stillness and quietness of your heart, forgive the person who wronged you, and let God work in your heart like only He can do.

In just a minute, we're going to stand and sing a closing song. Our pastors will be down here at the front. We'd love to pray with you. Whether it's about forgiveness and what God's doing in your heart through His Word this morning, or maybe there's something else going on in your home, in your heart, or in your life that you'd like prayer over, we'd be honored to pray with you, no matter what that is.

When I pray and we stand, that will be your invitation to come forward and let us pray with you.

Father, we love You, and we trust You. We thank You for the forgiveness that is available through Your Son, Jesus. It's in Your name we pray. Amen.