Forgiving Others

Romans 4:23-25

***“The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”***

Today we are talking about how to forgive others. On June 17th, 2015 a prayer meeting was getting started in Charleston South Carolina at Emanuel A.M.E. Church. 11 people were gathered to pray when a young white man came in to join them. His name was Dylan Roof. He had never been there before and the people at the gathering welcomed him in. He sat for an hour saying nothing. As they wrapped up the Bible study, they all bowed their heads to pray Dylan stood up and began shooting. When the shooting stopped 9 out the 11 that were gathered to pray were dead. **(Show picture of the victims).**

This incident opened up a lot of wounds in our country and a lot of emotions as well, but something miraculous was lost in the headlines amongst all of the racial tensions and hate and that is the power of forgiveness. Here is the headline from the newspaper**. (Show cover of newspaper).**

What if you wrote down all of your sins on paper? Sins like pride, greed, jealousy, and on and on we go. Paul is saying this is a debt that we owe to God that we could never repay. But Jesus came down and paid it in full. Then God the Father took that list and canceled it out never to be held against us again! This is the good news of the Gospel! This is what compelled these family members to step forward and do the unnatural thing and choose to forgive.

Forgiveness is the cornerstone of the Gospel. Its message permeates all throughout the Bible. Listen as I read Gods provision of forgiveness to us: ***Micah 7:19 “You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.” Isaiah 44:22 “I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.” Psalms 32:1 “Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.” Psalms 103:12 “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”***

In ***Ephesians 4:31-32, “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*** Paul is describing the condition of a heart that has failed to forgive when he lists of anger, rage and so on. Paul is saying **“get rid of it.”** But some people hold on to it so long that it becomes part of who they are. The irony of unforgiveness, the greatest victim in this is the person who holds on to unforgiveness.

Lewis Swedes says in His book “The Art Of Forgiveness” “The first and often the only person to be hurt by forgiveness is the person who does the forgiveness, when we genuinely forgive, we set the prisoner free and then discover that prisoner we set free was us.”

Paul uses the term “get rid of” which means to remove yourself from. So how do we do that? Well a sermon is no good if it isn’t practical so here are **4 ways to forgiveness:**

1. **Identify who it is you need to forgive.**

**Often the people angry at you are not really angry at you.**

1. **Determine what that person owes you.**

**To offer general forgiveness to someone does not heal specific wounds. Things like: some that stole from you, or my father or mother left me when I was young, or my spouse constantly shames me. Pin point it because we love to avoid and stuff things.**

1. **See the person through grace healed eyes.**
2. **Lastly, cancel their debt.**

**Father I forgive them and release them from their debt. Don’t wait to hear the other person say “I’m sorry” because it may never come. Remember it’s not always about reconciliation because that takes two, forgiveness only requires one and that’s you.**

Less than 48 hours after the shooting Dillon was in court for his bond hearing. The judge asked if anyone would like to say anything before, he proceeds. A lady stood up in a packed courtroom. Her name is Nadine Collier. Her mother Ethel Lance was killed in the shooting. She was 70. Nadine looked at Dillion and this is what she said, “II forgive you. You took something very precious away from me. I will never get to talk to her ever again- but I forgive you, and have mercy on your soul….You hurt me. You hurt a lot of people. If a God forgives you, I forgive you.”