

**Introduction:**

- I remember at 10 years of age when my dad gave his heart to Jesus, that he always carried a cheap scratched up silver metal cross in his pocket. It would be in his hand when pulled out change to buy something. It would be in his hat at night on his desk after he came in from work. It seemed to always take him to another place when he looked at. And he would often speak to me of the 'wonders of the cross.'
- A wonder is something that makes the heart ponder. It causes mystery to grow.
- A wonder mesmerizes the emotions of the heart.
- A wonder causes us to gaze with 'awe!' Like my dad's gaze at the scratched up metal cross.
- I want us to consider, this morning, the wonder of forgiveness found in the cross.
- *"And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments."* (Luke 23:33-34, ESV)
- Two things immediately stand out in this passage:
  - The loneliness and sorrow of the statement '*there they crucified him*'
  - The love and commitment in the statement '*Father, forgive them.*'
- In that moment... From the cross, Jesus declares the very reason He is there!
- In that moment... From the cross, Jesus declares our guilt.
- In that moment... From the cross, Jesus declares our forgiveness.
- In that moment... On the cross is revealed our great need and God's great supply!

**I. Forgiveness: Is God Dealing With Our Sin** or how God deals with our sin.

- A. Understanding forgiveness. Forgiveness is about God dealing with our sin. Love is His motivation! And mercy is His way!
1. Gr. *aphesis* – noun that almost always translated 'forgiveness', usually of sin. *"The forgiveness denoted is almost always that of God. It is constantly needed, and is granted when requested so long as there is a readiness to forgive others."* (Mt 18)  
Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). In TDNT (p. 88). W.B. Eerdmans.
  2. Heb. *Seliha* - Only used of God's offer of pardon and forgiveness towards man. *"The book of Hebrews seems to state just as categorically that forgiveness was ineffective and impossible"* (Heb 9:9; 10:4)." TWOT.
    - a) The blood of goats and bulls could not remove sin.
    - b) Goats and bulls could not perfect the conscience.
  3. Phillip Yancey states that, *"forgiveness is to give grace to someone who does not deserve it."* Forgiveness has to do with God's heart and activity towards us. As we consider the cross, another thing we acknowledge is...
- B. Where there is no blood there is no forgiveness. Two scriptures speak to this:

1. "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." (Hebrews 9:22, ESV) Clearest connection of the cross and forgiveness is found here.
2. "Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matthew 26:26-29, ESV)
3. "then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin." (Hebrews 10:17-18, ESV) If we are truly forgiven and our debt cancelled why would we need repeated sin offerings? This was Paul's point: The work of Christ upon the cross brought complete forgiveness of sin and cancellation of our debt! When forgiveness is present it must be known that a satisfactory sacrifice has been provided. The cross of Christ satisfied the justice of God. Nothing more, has to ever be done!
4. "All these text references communicate that forgiveness is rooted in and flows out of the cross of Christ." Kory Capps.

## II. The Cross: Jesus Identifying With Us

The Cross was the reason He came! He came to die.

- A. Think about this: Jesus' whole life was spent with sinners. He really could identify with us.
1. His mom and dad, Joseph and Mary, as righteous as they were, were still sinners.
  2. His ministry begins with 12 men who were classified as sinners and one of them a thief and traitor.
  3. He was constantly in the presence of sinners. Follow Him in the Gospels.
    - a) Luke 7 the woman of the night who fell on his feet. Pharisee ridiculed Him for letting her touch Him.
    - b) The tax collectors He ate with...Matthew, Zacchaeus. The parties at their houses.
    - c) The Samaritan woman he asked for water.
    - d) The Pharisees who wallowed in their pride.
    - e) The woman caught in the act of adultery.
    - f) The lepers he touched.
    - g) The demoniacs he restored.
  4. Now, on the cross, his team is scattered, and He finds himself alone among sinners.

- a) He looks down, Roman soldiers gamble for His clothes. Jn 19:23-34
  - b) To the right and left are the thieves on each side of him, reviling Him. Mt 27:44
  - c) The religious leaders mocking Him. Lk 23:35
  - d) The crowds spewing hate and blasphemies toward Him.
  - e) On the cross, Jesus remained among sinners, brutal sinners and His heart remained the same! He loved! He was there for them, therefore He prayed, *"Father, Forgive them..."*
5. He was there to become sin, for us, so that we could become righteous! *"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, ESV) Jesus was on the cross to fully identify with us! That is love!
- B. The cross represents that which was most vile, demonically inspired weapon of terror. The Cross meant:
- 1. The cross meant you were guilty of a crime. (Sin)
  - 2. The cross meant you were offensive because of crimes you committed. (Sin)
  - 3. The cross meant you had to be punished for that crime. (Sin)
  - 4. The cross meant that you were getting what you deserved. Because of sin. The one thief said it well: *"And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."* (Luke 23:41, ESV)
- C. On the cross He was an innocent man, without sin! But said, I will become sin so that they may become righteous! He became sin, there.
- 1. *"He was despised and rejected— a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins!"* (Isaiah 53:3-4, NLT)
  - 2. *"But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all."* (Isaiah 53:5-6, NLT)
    - a) Pierced for our rebellion
    - b) Crushed for our sins
    - c) Beaten so we could be whole
    - d) Whipped so we could be healed
  - 3. *"All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all."*

### III. The Cross and Forgiveness

- A. From this hellish place, Jesus prays: *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."*
1. Do you see how opposite the heart of Jesus is to the heart of humanity? *"When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."* (1 Peter 2:23, ESV)
  2. Jesus maintained the Father's heart as He took our punishment, weaknesses and sickness upon Himself.
    - a) He did not blame God for what was happening.
    - b) He did not blame Judas for what was happening.
    - c) He did not blame Peter for failing to stand with Him.
  3. He prayed! He prayed, "Father forgive them!" Who does that????
    - a) Jesus does!
    - b) And people filled with Jesus do. Stephen, *"He fell to his knees, shouting, 'Lord, don't charge them with this sin!' And with that, he died."* (Acts 7:60, NLT)
- B. Father forgive them is a cry of mercy! Let mercy triumph over judgment.
1. Do not give them what they deserve!
  2. Do not hold this against them!
  3. Release them from this debt of sin! With my blood, may it be paid in full!
- C. Father forgive them is a cry of love!
1. I have been among them and they belong to you!
  2. I have been among them and I love them, they know not what they do.
  3. I have been among them and now show them your heart...the full extent of your love...that I, Your Son, am your gift to them. I love them so much I would die for them!

### Conclusion:

- Revelation 20:15 *And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*
- "Father forgive them" is the gateway to the Kingdom of God!
- It is important to understand that Jesus' prayer, *"Father forgive them..."*, applies to all people, no matter your sin. But it is only activated through repentance and faith.
- The reason He was on the cross was for you—It shows how infinite His mercy and love is—it reveals the Father's heart!