

## **Good Friday 10 April 2009: Forgive Them With Jesus on the Cross**

**Welcome & Notices:** Ministerial Students' Fund; Sunrise service

### **Call to Worship:**

Psalm 22:9-11

- Above all Powers
- I Believe in Jesus

### **Prayer**

### **Scripture:**

Luke 23:26-38

### **Message**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

- Unforgiveness is a terrible thing...
- I wonder if you have ever been in a place when you have needed to be forgiven?
  - Where you've done something that is just so bad, that you've hurt someone so terrible
    - \* That you've disappointed yourself, and others and God
  - And you've need to know, more than anything, forgiveness for what you've done.
- I know many people, maybe most people, maybe even all people, have been there.
  - And I know many people, even till today need to hear that word of forgiveness
    - \* Even though the thing that they did wrong happened many years ago
- Many people need to hear the first word of Jesus as he hangs on the cross
  - The word of forgiveness  
"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing..."
- It reminds me of a line from one of my favourite movies, the movie is called "As it is in Heaven"
  - this is the situation: there is a husband who has been abusive to his wife and he lands up in jail, with the wife leaving him
    - \* The wife, forgiving him, says to him, "I know you only did the best that you could."

- That line sums up the many different lives in the story: people just doing the best they were able, making mistakes, sure, but doing their best to get through life.
  - And it sums up our lives as well: we do our best to get through the many challenges that life offers to us
    - \* we just do the best we can
- But sometimes we hurt those around us so badly.
  - It is into these situations that Christ speaks the word of forgiveness: for they do not know what they are doing...
- Want to explore this morning
  - what put Jesus on the cross
  - What it is that he forgives
  - And why his words can make a difference

### **(1) What put Jesus on the cross**

- To understand why Jesus ended up on the cross we need to go right back to the beginning of Jesus' ministry
  - We need to understand who Jesus was and what he came to do
- Jesus didn't come to die for our sins — which was what ultimately happened
  - Rather, Jesus came to proclaim and inaugurate the Kingdom of God
    - \* A kingdom of peace, and kingdom of love, and a kingdom of justice
- And right at the beginning of Mark's gospel Jesus makes the radical statement that this kingdom, the kingdom of God
  - Is at hand
    - \* And hearers are to repent and believe the good news
  - But good news for some, is very often bad news for others.
- There were many people who were not impressed with message that Jesus came to proclaim
  - the message that the Kingdom of God was at hand
- And they were not impressed because they had their own kingdom to be worried about
  - The power and the presence of the kingdom of God destroyed their own kingdoms
- When God's Kingdom was revealed in the words that Jesus spoke, the miracles he performed and the new life he offered
  - The kingdoms of the religious leaders of the day were threatened
    - \* the scribes and Pharisees found themselves looking like fools in Jesus presence.
  - The kingdoms of this world were threatened

- \* as Jesus offered to the masses ways of challenging the Roman domination system
  - The kingdom of those who had interests at heart apart from the welfare of the people were torn down
    - \* As Jesus refused to allow the wealthy to take advantage of the poor
- And so we see the movers and the shakers of Jerusalem
  - The religious leaders
  - The Roman governors
  - The wealthy landowners and money lenders
    - \* being put in a corner by Jesus
- And whenever somebody is placed in a corner, just like an animal they respond with ugly emotions
  - They respond with hatred, and anger, and fear
- When the kingdom of light is proclaimed the deeds of darkness are exposed for what they are
  - And so those who are of the darkness, believing themselves to be of the light, begin to speak words which oppose the light
    - \* Words of hatred and anger and fear
- And these words sometimes have a life of their own
  - The more one speaks words of hatred, the more powerful the hatred becomes
  - The more one speaks words of anger, the more angry one gets, and one starts to justify the anger
  - The more one speaks words of fear, the greater and more threatening that which causes one's fear becomes
- Until the whole of Jerusalem is worked up against Jesus and those three little words of fear and anger and hatred nail Jesus to the cross

## **(2) What does Jesus forgive?**

- And the first words that Jesus speaks as he hangs there; the first word of the cross
  - Is the word of forgiveness
- Is a word that takes all the power that is wrapped up in the anger and the fear and the hatred and neutralises it
  - “Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”
- And there is a sense that he was right
  - They did not know what they were doing
  - Most people probably thought that they were doing the right thing
    - \* Here was a threat to the homes, their country, their lifestyle

- Because of their anger and fear and hatred they didn't stop to see what was really happening
  - They allowed themselves to be whipped up into a frenzy
  - They were doing the best they could to protect their interests
    - \* The religious leaders doing their best to keep their church going in the threat of a new religious movement
    - \* Pilate doing his best to keep the peace at the time of the Passover
    - \* Businessmen doing their best to keep their livelihoods so that they could look after their families
- All they were doing was getting rid of a trouble maker
  - They really didn't know what they were doing
- Jesus says forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.
  - Jesus was willing to stop and look past the words that placed him on the cross, and look to the people behind those words
    - \* And forgive them
- And I believe that this action of his does a very important thing
  - More than anything else these words of forgiveness
    - \* Words that defuse the anger and hatred and fear
- Are the words that allow him to come off the cross and the experience resurrection life.
- Wright says it this way: "Forgiveness brings the life of heaven to earth; God's future into the present."
  - Everything that Jesus has been proclaiming about the Kingdom of God being at hand is revealed to be true in his words of forgiveness
    - \* Words that are spoken to the crowds, words that are spoken to individuals.

"Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

## CONCLUSION

- As I conclude I want to offer two perspectives on the word of forgiveness this morning:
  - Firstly, the things that we have done to nail Christ to the cross, and others
  - Those things that cause us to respond in anger and fear and hatred
- Jesus speaks the words of forgiveness to us as well.
  - Jesus sees the person behind those emotions and forgives us
- But he also calls us to forgive others in the same way
  - The Lord's prayer: forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us.

- Now here's the thing
  - We allow the words of others, the words of anger and hatred and fear of others
    - \* to nail us to a cross
- People have done stuff to us and they say stuff to us and we are just so angry about it
  - People have said stuff, words that have crucified us and nailed us to the cross
- Here's the thing: we will keep hanging from that cross and we will not come down
  - Until we are willing to speak the word of forgiveness
  - Until we recognise the hatred and fear and anger and are willing to see the person behind it
    - \* and the reason that they spoke those things
  - And as I said earlier, these are usually small things which grow by themselves
- Those words which sent Jesus to the cross are the same words that will keep us there until we are willing to defuse them with the word of forgiveness
  - The first word that Jesus speaks on the cross is the word of forgiveness, and it is this word that truly brings God's kingdom.
    - \* That brings God's peace and love and justice
- May it be so for you, even as it is for me.
- Amen

**Prayer (CHECK TIME!)**

- Forever Grateful