

## Sermon Easter Two 2019

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Micah 7:18-20; Colossians 3:12-17

Today I want to talk about the “F” word with you.

It seems to me that if our need had been for information God would have sent an educator.

If our need had been for technology God would have sent a scientist.

If our need had been for wealth God would have sent an economist.

If our need had been for pleasure God would have sent an entertainer.

Friends our greatest need was and is the need to be forgiven and delivered. That’s why God sent Jesus.

It also seems to me that today’s society has a hard time acknowledging sin.

Even guilt over wrong doing has gone out of fashion in our increasingly self-absorbed society.

Even some Christians base their ideas of right and wrong, not on the bible, but on societies ever changing standards.

The bible reminds us in Romans chapter three that all have sinned and fallen short of God’s standard.

That’s not a past reality that’s our daily situation.

Even the great Apostle Paul recognized that. In Romans seven he said, “The good I want to do I don’t do and the evil I hate doing is the very thing I find myself doing.”

You see it is not just the things we do wrong it is also our failure to do the things we should do but leave undone.

Luther brings this point out very sharply in his explanation of each of the Ten Commandments.

Luther pointed out that each commandment has a positive side and a negative side.

For example, it is not enough to refrain from stealing. We should seek to help others keep and improve what they already have.

In Greek the word sin was understood as a missing the mark just as an archer missed his target with his arrow.

Sin is the failure to realize our true God ordained goal and purpose in life.

It is the failure to do what we ought to have done as well as what we ought not to have done.

It's the failure to be what we were supposed to be before the fall.

In this petition in the Lord's Prayer God wants us to realize that we are sinners in need of his forgiveness, but more, that his forgiveness is freely offered in Christ.

Scripture reveals God as a merciful God who is quick to forgive.

It reveals a God who removes our sins as far as the east is from the west.

In the parable of the prodigal son we see in his father a picture of our heavenly father who has forgiven us even before we think to ask.

Like the prodigal's father our heavenly Father waits patiently for us to come home so He can embrace us with his forgiveness.

Of course God doesn't forgive sin because sin doesn't matter to God. He forgives because Jesus death matters to him.

That's the reason Jesus died. His sacrifice paid the penalty for our sin. He took the blame for you and me.

Some people choose to get offended by such talk. Surely, they say, God didn't need to allow such a horrible thing to happen because of our sin?"

Surely a loving God wouldn't punish people for their sin.

People who think like that have no concept of the destructive power of sin and what it has done to our lives.

The petition "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us" helps us to understand that while sin is great, salvation is greater.

In Romans six Paul tells us that we are not forgiven to keep on sinning but so that we may become more Christ-like.

Of course we will more often than not fail. But that's when God's forgiveness starts to work to restore us.

Dale Carnegie tells the story about the eating habits of grizzly bears.

Apparently when they eat they will allow no other creature near except the skunk.

The consequences of not allowing the skunk to dine is rather unpleasant.

We need to have the wisdom of a grizzly bear when it comes to forgiveness. The consequences of not forgiving can stink up our life something terrible.

People use and abuse one another, sometimes they do it intentionally other times because we are all curved in on ourselves.

John Fisk in his book "Seven Rules Every Christian Should Break as Often as Possible" gives a comprehensive description sin and sinners.

*"Sin is a disease. It is the universal tendency of humans to prefer self-serving actions and speak self-serving words because we are constantly thinking self-serving thoughts so that we can get the most for ourselves in any given moment or circumstance of life."*

That's why the dictionary has words like "Revenge" and "Passive Aggression" and "Sarcasm" and "gossip" in it.

Scripture clearly warns us not to allow bitterness to take root in our souls. It warns us not to allow the sun go down on our anger.

Why? Because in the end our unwillingness to forgive destroys us more than it does the other to whom we direct it.

In the book "Forgiving the dead Man Walking" the author found she had to forgive the man who raped her countless times, killed her boyfriend and left her for dead; not for his sake but for hers.

When we forgive it works as a healing process for our own souls which would otherwise be eaten up with bitterness.

On one occasion General Oglethorpe said to John Wesley, "I never forgive". Wesley replied, "Then I hope you never sin."

God offers forgiveness to everyone, sadly the one with the unforgiving heart often won't accept it. We would do well to remember Matthew 18; the parable of what happened to the unforgiving servant.

Remember the story of the woman in Luke seven who washed Jesus feet with her hair?

She knew the gratitude and joy of forgiveness.

Those who are forgiven much and know it, love much and extend that forgiveness to those who sin against them.

Jesus himself is our supreme example; forgiving us from the cross.

May it be that as we journey through our life we can grasp the greatness of our sin but the far greater power of God's forgiveness and from a grateful heart been enabled to forgive those who sin against us also.