

“The way of forgiveness: Colossians 3:12-14”

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost – October 24, 2021

Tom Mount – Holy Trinity Chico

Scripture reading – Col 3:12-14

¹²Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Extending forgiveness

I. The Meaning of Forgiveness

1. What it is not

- A. Forgetting an offense
- B. Excusing or condoning injustice
- C. Ignoring or denying the pain
- D. Placating or smothering conflict
- E. Reconciling and getting back together

2. What it is

- A. “Giving up our claim on the person” – Lewis Smedes
- B. “Surrendering the right to hurt back” – Arch Hart

C. "Getting the hate out" – Bill Flannagan

D. Refusing to play God (Dt 32:35; Rom 12:19)

II. The Importance of Forgiveness

1. It frees us from the past.
2. It enables us to give up control.
3. It reduces stress.
4. It keeps us in reconciled fellowship with God (Mt 6:12-15; 18:21-35).

III. The Way of Forgiveness

1. It is a decision.
2. It accepts the person "as is."
3. It is choosing to love.
4. It is a process.

IV. The Steps of Forgiveness

1. You HURT.
2. You HATE.
3. You HEAL.
4. You (sometimes) COME TOGETHER.

V. People You May Need to Forgive

- Parents or step-parents?
- Brothers or sisters?
- Other relatives?
- Friends – present or past?
- Teachers or coaches?
- Spouse or ex-spouse?
- Kids?
- Neighbors?
- Pastor or other church leader?
- Others?

VI. A Prayer for God's Help in Forgiving

Dear Father in heaven, I thank you for the riches of your kindness, forbearance, and patience, knowing that your kindness had led me to repentance. I confess that I have not extended that same patience and kindness toward others who have offended me, but instead I have harbored bitterness and resentment. I pray that during this time of self-examination, you would bring to mind only those people that I have not forgiven in order that I may do so (Matthew 18.35). I also pray that if I have offended others, you would bring to mind only those people from whom I need to seek forgiveness and the extent to which I need to seek it (Matthew 5.23-24). I ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

VII. Some Additional Resources

- *Forgive and Forget*, Lewis Smedes, Simon & Shuster, 1884.
- *The Art of Forgiving*, Lewis Smedes, Random House, 1996.
- *God Meant it for Good*, R.T. Kendall, MorningStar Publications, 1986.
- *Exploring Forgiveness*, Robert Enright & Joanna North, University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.
- *The Lost Art of Forgiving*, Johann Christoph Arnold, Plough Publishing, 1997.
- <http://forgiveness-institute.org>