

FORGIVENESS

A Sermon by Rev. Ron Friedrich
June 27, 2004 - Pentecost 4-C

This sermon refers to all three lessons for the 4th Sunday after Pentecost, reprinted here. The Sermon begins on page 4.

Old Testament Lesson: 2 Samuel 11:26-12:10,13-15

²⁶ When Bathsheba heard that her husband was dead, she cried for him. ²⁷ After she finished her time of sadness, David sent servants to bring her to his house. She became David's wife and gave birth to his son, but the LORD did not like what David had done.

^{12:1} The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to David, he said, "There were two men in a city. One was rich, but the other was poor. ² The rich man had many sheep and cattle. ³ But the poor man had nothing except one little female lamb he had bought. The poor man fed the lamb, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food and drank from his cup and slept in his arms. The lamb was like a daughter to him.

⁴ "Then a traveler stopped to visit the rich man. The rich man wanted to feed the traveler, but he didn't want to take one of his own sheep or cattle. Instead, he took the lamb from the poor man and cooked it for his visitor."

⁵ David became very angry at the rich man. He said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this should die! ⁶ He must pay for the lamb four times for doing such a thing. He had no mercy!"

⁷ Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I appointed you king of Israel and saved you from Saul. ⁸ I gave you his kingdom and his wives. And I made you king of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you even more. ⁹ So why did you ignore the LORD's command? Why did you do what he says is wrong? You killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the Ammonites and took his wife to be your wife! ¹⁰ Now there will always be people in your family who will die by a sword, because you did not respect me; you took the wife of Uriah the Hittite for yourself!'

¹³ Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

Nathan answered, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You will not die. ¹⁴ But what you did caused the LORD's enemies to lose all respect for him. For this reason the son who was born to you will die."

¹⁵ Then Nathan went home. And the LORD caused the son of David and Bathsheba, Uriah's widow, to be very sick. ¹⁶ David prayed to God for the baby. David refused to eat or drink. He went into his house and stayed there, lying on the ground all night. ¹⁷ The older leaders of David's family came to him and tried to pull

him up from the ground, but he refused to get up or to eat food with them. (*New Century Version*)

New Testament Lesson: Galatians 2:11-21

¹¹ When Peter came to Antioch, I challenged him to his face, because he was wrong. ¹² Peter ate with the non-Jewish people until some Jewish people sent from James came to Antioch. When they arrived, Peter stopped eating with those who weren't Jewish, and he separated himself from them. He was afraid of the Jews. ¹³ So Peter was a hypocrite, as were the other Jewish believers who joined with him. Even Barnabas was influenced by what these Jewish believers did. ¹⁴ When I saw they were not following the truth of the Good News, I spoke to Peter in front of them all. I said, "Peter, you are a Jew, but you are not living like a Jew. You are living like those who are not Jewish. So why do you now try to force those who are not Jewish to live like Jews?"

¹⁵ We were not born as non-Jewish "sinners," but as Jews. ¹⁶ Yet we know that a person is made right with God not by following the law, but by trusting in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus, that we might be made right with God because we trusted in Christ. It is not because we followed the law, because no one can be made right with God by following the law.

¹⁷ We Jews came to Christ, trying to be made right with God, and it became clear that we are sinners, too. Does this mean that Christ encourages sin? No! ¹⁸ But I would really be wrong to begin teaching again those things that I gave up. ¹⁹ It was the law that put me to death, and I died to the law so that I can now live for God. ²⁰ I was put to death on the cross with Christ, and I do not live anymore—it is Christ who lives in me. I still live in my body, but I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself to save me. ²¹ By saying these things I am not going against God's grace. Just the opposite, if the law could make us right with God, then Christ's death would be useless. (*New Century Version*)

Gospel Lesson: Luke 7:36-50

³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, so Jesus went into the Pharisee's house and sat at the table. ³⁷ A sinful woman in the town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house. So she brought an alabaster jar of perfume ³⁸ and stood behind Jesus at his feet, crying. She began to wash his feet with her tears, and she dried them with her hair, kissing them many times and rubbing them with the perfume. ³⁹ When the Pharisee who asked Jesus to come to his house saw this, he thought to himself, "If Jesus were a prophet, he would know that the woman touching him is a sinner!"

⁴⁰ Jesus said to the Pharisee, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

Simon said, "Teacher, tell me."

⁴¹ Jesus said, "Two people owed money to the same banker. One owed five hundred coins and the other owed fifty. ⁴² They had no money to pay what they owed, but the banker told both of them they did not have to pay him. Which person will love the banker more?"

⁴³ Simon, the Pharisee, answered, "I think it would be the one who owed him the most money."

Jesus said to Simon, "You are right." ⁴⁴ Then Jesus turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I came into your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss of greeting, but she has been kissing my feet since I came in. ⁴⁶ You did not put oil on my head, but she poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷ I tell you that her many sins are forgiven, so she showed great love. But the person who is forgiven only a little will love only a little."

⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

⁴⁹ The people sitting at the table began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

⁵⁰ Jesus said to the woman, "Because you believed, you are saved from your sins. Go in peace." (*New Century Version*)

[Sermon]

Here in church we use a secret CODE!

Well, maybe our CODE really is not secret.
 But words and language we use here in church seem very different
 than the language we use
 in our homes,
 with our friends,
 in our work.

Word Signs and language we use here,
 we don't see in the Deaf school,
 we don't see in the Deaf club,
 and maybe we don't see our church language in our Christian
 homes.

Our Church language is almost same-as secret CODE.

Example: *[spell]* H.E.A.V.E.N. Sign "heaven."
 We use that word a lot in church.

Do you see people outside of church sign "heaven"? ? ?
 A little-bit, but not much.

People outside of church say the word H.E.L.L. a lot,
 but they don't say the word "heaven."
 That's strange.

Another example: G.O.D. Sign "God."

Yes, people outside of church sign "God" a lot.
 But how do they use that sign?
 What do they mean?

If they say, "My God!"
 are they really talking to God? (No.)
 are they talking about God? (No.)

People sign "My God!" the same as they use the word "hell,"
 only for showing emotion.

(Sometimes you see people sign "God bless you!"
 That's wonderful,
 but RARE,
 when people honor God's name in the world.)

Another example of our secret church language: S.I.N.
 How do you sign that word?.... Sin.

We use that word in church.
 Do we use that word "sin" outside?
 Do we sign that word "sin" in the deaf club?
 Do we see that word in the daily newspaper?

No, "sin" is a special church word.

Imagine someone comes to visit our church for the first time.
 That person sees our conversation (talk). Then that person says,
 "Please explain to me this sign, 'sin.' I don't-know that sign. 'Sin'
 means what? "

? Your answer? What sign can we use instead of "sin?"...

? "Wrong" ? "Blame" ? "Fault" ?
 Those are all words that can mean "sin."

Maybe the Lord's Prayer will seem more clear if we sign:
 "Forgive our wrongs,

same-as we forgive people who wrong against us."

Forgive...

That also is an example of our secret CODE language.

"F.O.R.G.I.V.E."

People use that sign "forgive" outside of church a lot,
but it means something really different.

People sign "forgive," meaning E.X.C.U.S.E.
as "Excuse me, please."

If you see to people talking together by the door, and you must go
between them, you sign "Excuse/forgive me."

Imagine we have church lunch.

You have a coffee cup in your hand,

I don't see you,

I carelessly bump you,

and your coffee spills.

I say, "Sorry! Please forgive me."

Imagine that you are driving on the expressway and someone
drives carelessly, hits you, and wrecks your car.

What does the other driver say?

"Please, excuse me"?

No! That is too weak!

For very big problems,

for very bad mistakes,

people outside our church don't accept, "Forgive me."

In the world, people only forgive little careless things.

In the world, people don't understand:

God forgives all wrongs,

small mistakes
and big sins.

For the world, "forgive" is a weak sign.
But for God, "forgive" is a strong sign.

How does God sign "forgive?"
[*sign very small: "forgive" ??? (No.)*]
God signs: "Clean!" 100%!

Today we have three Bible stories. All three stories focus on that word "forgive."

In our first Bible story, King David did a terrible wrong.
He did adultery, then murder.
God warned him.
David was sorry.
God forgave David.

In our second Bible story today, Peter and Paul had a fight. Why?
Peter acted with two faces.

A few "good" church people have the wrong idea about forgiving.
They think that God only forgives good people.
They think that God forgives only little sins, not big sins.
They think that
 first you must obey all the church rules,
 then God forgives you.

That's wrong! That is terribly wrong!
God forgives you 100%! All your wrongs, big and small.
God forgives, and God forgets.

In our third Bible story,

Jesus tells proud religious people:

"You really love God *a-little-bit*.

Why? You think God must forgive you only a-little-bit."

If we don't think we have big sin,

we don't think that we need a real Savior.

That's why the woman sinner in this story

loves Jesus very much.

And that's why the good religious people

can only criticize Jesus.

Notice the words those people said about Jesus:

"Who is this man,

that he can forgive sins?"

The people mean that to criticize Jesus.

But for us, that sentence is wonderful.

"Who is this man,

that he can forgive sins?"

That man is God-become-Man, Jesus Christ.

He can forgive your sin.

And He really forgives you.

Jesus saves you. Go in peace.

Amen.