

Lent Wednesday #5 Devotional Message 3/13/2002—LOL, Westfield

Title: “Father, forgive them”

Text: **Luke 23:32-34** Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

Intro: Ills.: As far as East is from West

Theme: Praying for another’s forgiveness involves understanding God’s perspective on sin and grace.

To intercede for another’s sin you must stand among them and with them

- Jesus did not come to be a Savior from a distance but took on our human nature and stood among us
 1. He was crucified among two insurrectionist murders—although not deserving it, he identified with them
 2. Jesus came to be our Savior—no matter how good we feign to be or how bad we really are
- Humbling ourselves of any self-righteousness before we approach the throne of grace
 1. **Ills.: Parable of the Pharisee and Publican (Luke 18)**
 2. Praying for forgiveness is asking God to “forget” their sin (send it away)
 3. *"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." Jeremiah 31:34*
 4. **Ills.: Forgiven and Forgotten** (Philippine priest with hidden sinful past and woman with a vision of Christ)
 5. Coming with the same hope/expectation in God’s promise to remove our sin

Ignorance is not an excuse for lawlessness but it also is not a reason to stop praying for another

- Not coming to God justifying or excusing another’s sin
 1. **Ills.: Father forgive them!**
 2. Ignorance of God’s righteous demands does not excuse or blunt the severity of punishment if they are disregarded
 3. *"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God." Romans 3:19*
 4. When we understand that God is serious about sin, we are serious about praying for another’s forgiveness and sharing God’s Good News with them
- Not giving up praying for another’s salvation/forgiveness just because there seems to be no result
 1. Often frustration/fatigue over a friend or loved one who just doesn’t seem to be coming around hinders our prayers
 2. The very ones for whom Jesus prayed for forgiveness for nailing him to the cross also gambled for his clothes
 3. God’s patience with sinful mankind comes from the fact that he does not want to lose anyone to hell
 4. *"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." 2 Peter 3: 9*
- Always praying for another’s forgiveness as if it will accomplish something
 1. Because Jesus made the perfect sacrifice for sins, **FORGIVENESS IS TO BE HAD**
 2. Because Jesus is in heaven before the Father, **FORGIVENESS HAS A PERFECT ADVOCATE**

As Far as East Is from West

Do you know how far that is? Truth is, it can't even be measured. I brought a globe to show you that the east and west are actually further apart than the north and south. If I start here in North America and go north, eventually I get to the top of the globe at the North Pole. If I continue the same direction, I start going south. Eventually the north meets the south. But if I start in Illinois here and keep going east, when will I start going west? Never. The psalmist says God will remove our sin from us--not as far as the north is from the south, but as far as the east is from the west.

Father, forgive them!

A pastor found some time during the lull of summer to come up with the topics of his sermons each week until Christmas and sent them in to the local newspaper to be included in the weekly add. At the beginning of September, the church school superintendent requested that a special worship service be held in September to install the teachers during a Sunday morning worship service. Although the pastor said that he could not change the sermon topic for that Sunday to a Christian Education theme because they were already submitted to the newspaper, the S.S. superintendent agrees that was not necessary. A few days before Christian Education Sunday the newspaper reported: "This coming Sunday, the Sunday school teachers of the Oxford Church will be recognized and installed. Reverend Smith’s special sermon for this occasion is entitled, "Father Forgive Them for They Know Not What They Do!"