

Sermon Series: “Embracing Forgiveness”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—6/24/2007

Title: “Fire Up the Barbeque”

Text: Romans 12: 17-21

Intro.: *Ills.: Not Coals but Hot Water*

Theme: Adopting God’s way of salvation through forgiveness in Jesus is not so much a theological doctrine as it is a statement of faith that God can work the miracle of a changed heart through soft answers of forgiveness.

Forgiveness is — to stop doing what you know is intentionally anti-God

- Doing what is good rather than what is evil
 1. *Don't pay people back with evil for the evil they do to you. vs. 17a*
 2. Paul chastises us with the words “**stop doing**” — honestly we all plot the demise of the other that hurts us
 3. Paul’s use of *agathos* (good) and *kakos* (evil) — who is master of your soul: Jesus or Satan?
- Using the “**noble pagan litmus test**”
 1. *Focus your thoughts on those things that are considered noble in the eyes of everyone. vs. 17b*
 2. Focus your thoughts on those things that are considered noble by your neighbors and community
 3. **Ills.: Is vengeance a lazy form of grieving?**
- Make your thought process always default to asking that question
 1. **Ills.: internet default home page (google, news or sports site, napster)**
 2. *Focus your thoughts...if it is possible, as far as it depends on you, to live at peace with everyone. vs. 18*
 3. Peace-making (intentional) vs. peace-keeping (passive) – you cannot control another; you can only control how you react/respond to their sinfulness
 - a. When parenting a teen or responding to a controlling parenting style
 - b. When handling a bitter spouse or an out-of-control sibling
 - c. When enduring a harsh boss or coping with a destructive coworker
 - d. **Make up your mind to not allow another’s sin to cause you to sin!**

Forgiveness is — to consider God’s grace to you when considering grace to another

- Defer to God’s ability to be God
 1. *Don't take revenge, dear friends. Instead, rather defer to God's wrath. After all, Scripture says, "I alone have the right to take revenge. I will pay back, says the Lord." vs. 19*
 2. That requires a submission to the Lordship of Jesus in your life (*defer to God*)
 - a. *And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Ephes. 5:21*
 3. Rejoice in God’s mercy which restrains what we really deserve
 - a. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Romans 1:18*
 - b. *"For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed." Malachi 3:6*
 - c. *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9*
- Focus on being used as God’s **instrument of grace** in a tough situation
 1. *"If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; For you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you. Prov. 25: 21-22 (vs. 20)*
 2. **Ills.: Palestinian Pastor Learns to Love Enemy**
- Be what God has called you to be — “**more than conquerors**” (**Romans 8: 37**)
 1. *Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil with good. vs. 21*
 2. Let God so indwell you with the nature of His Son, Jesus, that you act and think and speak like him
 - a. *For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Philip. 2:13*

Not coals but hot water

A woman, who had a very stormy relationship with her husband and had recently endured a very hurtful comment and action from him, was consulting with a trusted Christian friend, seeking her advice of what she should do in this situation. After listening to her for a while, the friend thinking of Paul's admonition in Romans 12 to avoid taking revenge but rather leaving it up to the Lord asked, "Have you ever tried heaping coals of fire on his head?" Thinking for a moment, the discouraged and somewhat embittered wife replied, "No, I haven't done THAT, but I HAVE used HOT WATER!"

Humanitarian Aid Changes Muslims' Minds

According to a poll conducted in January 2006 by the Terror Free Tomorrow organization, humanitarian aid is a very effective way to improve how Muslim countries view the United States of America. In May of 2003, research indicated that only 15 percent of people in Indonesia—the world's most populous Muslim nation—had a favorable view of the U.S. However, the country was later devastated by the Indian Ocean tsunami, which struck in December of 2004. In the year that followed, humanitarian aid poured into the affected areas from the U.S. and other Western nations. As a result, a January 2006 poll showed that Indonesian people with a favorable view of the U.S. had nearly tripled, jumping to 44 percent. In addition, information from the well-respected Indonesian Survey Institute showed that "support for Bin Laden and terrorism has dropped to its lowest level since 9/11." Finally, the ISI reported that Indonesians with a "very unfavorable" view of the U.S. had fallen to just 13 percent—down from 48 percent prior to the tsunami. **Sam O'Neal, St. Charles, Illinois; source: Tom McCawley, "U.S. Tsunami Aid Still Reaps Goodwill," Christian Science Monitor (2-28-06), p.12**

Is vengeance a lazy form of grief?

But in Africa, in Mantobo, the Ku believe that the only way to end grief is to save a life. If someone is murdered, a year of mourning ends with a ritual that we call the drowning-man trial. There's an all-night party beside the river. At dawn, the killer is put in a boat, he's taken out in the water, and he's dropped. He's bound so that he cannot swim. "The family of the dead then has to make a choice. They can let him drown, or they can swim out and save him. The Ku believe that if the family lets the killer drown, they'll have justice but spend the rest of their lives in mourning. But if they save him, if they admit that life isn't always just, that very act can take away their sorrow. Vengeance is a lazy form of grief." ***The Interpreter* (Universal Pictures, 2005), directed by Sydney Pollack**

Palestinian Pastor Learns to Love Enemy

Israel, and a Christian to boot, he faces a wide variety of persecution. One of the more dangerous forms of harassment comes from the Israeli soldiers who patrol the city, looking for potential terrorists. These soldiers routinely impose spontaneous curfews on Palestinians, and even have the legal right to shoot at a Palestinian if he or she does not respond quickly enough to their summons. Christ's command in the Sermon on the Mount to "love your enemies" seemed impossible to Yohanna. And yet there it was—unambiguous and unchanging. At first, Yohanna tried and failed in his attempts to feel love. Instead, the Israeli soldiers' random, daily checks for Palestinian identification cards—sometimes stopping them for hours—fed Yohanna's fear and anger. As he confessed his inability to God, Yohanna realized something significant. The radical love of Christ is not an emotion, but a decision. He decided to show love, however reluctantly, by sharing the gospel message with the soldiers on the street. With new resolution, Yohanna began to carry copies of a flyer with him, written in Hebrew and English, with a quotation from Isaiah 53 and the words "Real Love" printed across the top. Every time a soldier stopped him, he handed him both his ID card and the flyer. Because the quote came from the Hebrew Scriptures, the soldier usually asked him about it before letting him go. After several months of this, Yohanna suddenly noticed his feelings toward the soldiers had changed. "I would pass in the same street, see the same soldiers as before, but now find myself praying, 'Lord, let them stop me, so that I can share with them the love of Christ.'" **"When Love Is Impossible," Trinity Magazine (Fall 2005), p. 16-17**

Romans 12:17-21

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