

And then breathe out forgiveness. The offense is gone and the love of Christ stands in its place as you breathe out forgiveness.

I invite you to start this today (if you haven't been doing it since Sunday) and make the practice of forgiving more and more automatic (not unthoughtful, but more the nature of what you do). You will see your life and the world around you change dramatically.

Friday

In preparation for Sunday worship, you are invited to read and reflect upon Isaiah 58 and Matthew 6:16-18.

Devotional

Breathing Forgiveness

January 22, 2023

Monday

Read Matthew 6:14-15

Forgiveness can be as simple as breathing. You breathe in, your body processes the breath – keeping the good and releasing the bad, and you breathe out.

Without breathing, there is no life. Without forgiveness, there is no life in God.

Know that this is not about salvation because salvation does not depend on what you do. Salvation is a gift from God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The forgiveness of God is also a gift. The foundation of God's forgiveness builds upon his own character. In love he regards the death of Christ as sufficient to pay our penalty. Forgiving others is not a meritorious work for earning salvation.

Here on this Monday, I encourage you to read the above again and sit back, relax for at least a few moments, and breathe in God's forgiveness and breathe out God's love.

Tuesday

Read Matthew 18:21-35

What Jesus is saying is that if you don't forgive others, you are rejecting and denying God's forgiveness of you. God has gifted you salvation, but by refusing to forgive others like God has forgiven you, you are rejecting God's gift and your need for God's forgiveness.

The servant in this parable speaks to exactly this point. Jesus tells the story of a master who forgives a servant a great debt instead of

throwing him in prison. The forgiven servant turns around won't forgive the comparably small debt of a neighbor and his harsh in demanding payment. The master hears of this and has the unforgiving servant thrown into prison until the servant repays his original debt.

If you've received God's forgiveness and you don't forgive others, you are denying and rejecting God's forgiveness for you. If you want to have a deep, rich life that brings you closer to Jesus, you will forgive generously.

Today, take stock and then observe yourself throughout the day. Who do you need to forgive? What is the next step you will take to forgive them?

Wednesday

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Jesus is teaching forgiveness of others as a lifestyle and the way of God. Jesus was a master of forgiveness. He gave his life for your sins and forgives you for the need to do it. He forgave his executioners from the cross. He forgave everyone – whether they sought forgiveness or not. He didn't pretend he wasn't offended or hurt (because one doesn't forgive what one denies needs forgiveness), but he experienced their offenses and forgave them out of devotion to the glory of God.

Jesus breathed in their offenses. He experienced them. He took them into the core of his being. He didn't seek out offense, but he didn't deny what was there.

Jesus processed their offenses. He took on their words and their actions. He considered their weight. He then gave that weight to God. The power of the offense left him.

Jesus breathed out forgiveness. Don't just answer this blithely, consider it... do you want to forgive like Jesus?

Thursday

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4

If you want to have a better life, a closer relationship with God, and better relationships with everyone else, here is what you are going to start doing now to have a lifestyle of forgiveness and experience the riches of God:

Breathe in the offenses. Don't go looking for offenses to breathe in. And you don't need to linger in an offensive space. But don't deny yourself breath because there is offense mixed in. It is there. Acknowledge the offense. Don't deny that you are offended. Experience it in that moment.

Process the offense. Reflect on what has happened. Consider the weight and power of the offense. Too many of us are suffering because we are carrying around offenses. Some of us have carried weight around for so long that we forget what the weight is, we've just adjusted to life with that weight and feel overburdened to the point the weight is suffocating us.

Be charitable in your processing and consider the counsel of Martin Luther, "This is the way you ought to think about your neighbor's sin: although your neighbor has acted against you in malice, still he is confused, captivated, and dazzled by the devil. Therefore, you should be pious enough to take pity on him for being overpowered by the devil." This is a perspective Jesus knows and you should, too.

Give the offense to God through Jesus. Give the burden of the offense to Jesus, for as he teaches in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Release the pain to God in Christ.

If warranted and you are able, speak to the person or people who offended you in the way Jesus teaches in Matthew 18:15-17. (over)