

Dan Banos: Mindful Forgiveness (29/6/19)

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 8:12 & Isaiah 43:25

Introduction:

The title of this message may make you a bit uncomfortable because in our society today mindfulness is often associated with eastern meditation. But the idea of being mindful of something is simply the idea of being cognisant, conscious and thoughtful. Forgiveness, like many other things, is a conscious choice.

Summary:

1. Forgiveness is a Choice
2. Forgiveness is Non-Negotiable
3. Forgiveness brings Freedom

Forgiveness is a Choice:

We are going to begin by separating the idea of forgiveness from the idea of forgiving someone.

Before we talk about forgiving people it is necessary to understand what forgiveness truly is. Forgiveness is illustrated well in John Bunyan's old allegory *The Pilgrims Progress*. It is depicted by the way that Christians burden rolled off his back, making his life so much lighter.

Question: Do we not believe that we are forgiven because we keep sinning?

OR

Do we keep sinning because we don't believe we are forgiven?

"...not only do they forgive but they also reduce their levels of depression and anxiety." <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2013-44748-001>

But, as you would expect, God already knew this 🤔

- Isaiah 1:18 - Forgiveness brings cleansing.
- Psalm 103:10-12 - God promises to remove sin entirely.
- Micah 7:19 - He also promises that He casts our sins into the depths of the sea.

Forgiveness is Non-Negotiable:

Forgiveness is necessary for us to understand who Christ is.

- Matthew 6:14,15 - If we will forgive, God will forgive us. However, and this is the part we don't like, if we do not forgive, God's forgiveness is unable to penetrate our hearts.
- Matthew 18:23-35 - In this story the servant deals harshly immediately after his debt has been cancelled. Perhaps he didn't believe in the forgiveness of the master?
- Ephesians 4:32 - We need to learn to forgive as God forgives! Impartially.

We won't understand God's forgiveness or His character unless we choose to forgive.

"He who refuses to forgive is thereby casting away his own hope of pardon...He who is unmerciful toward others shows that he himself is not a partaker of God's pardoning grace... It is true that he may once have received forgiveness; but his unmerciful spirit shows that he now rejects God's pardoning love." Ellen G White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 147-151.

Mindful forgiveness is not about what has been done to you, it is about what you can do today!

We have done it all to God, yet He freely forgave us... We owe it to Him to render the same quality of forgiveness!

Forgiveness brings Freedom:

- James 5:16 - There is power unleashed through forgiveness.
- Colossians 2:13,14 - God has freely cancelled our debts through forgiveness.

God has done everything necessary for our peace. Why do we continue to hold onto our guilt and shame?

The paralytic whom Jesus wanted to be healed. Jesus gave Him forgiveness! Is it possible that had Jesus not healed him, the paralytic would still have done away happy because of forgiveness.

Forgiveness is the pathway to peace and wholeness, but it is the one thing that God cannot impart to us without our permission!

So, what is holding you back today?

Is it worth it?

Forgiveness:

1. Forgiveness is NOT forgetting!!

Does God have divine dementia? God forgives, puts the past behind, and restores. He does not simply *forget*.

Forgetting would take away from who you are. But forgiveness allows your identity to be preserved when the past is let go of. God's "forgetting" is a choice to perceive reality through new eyes.

We can for the same. We don't need to forget, we just need to choose to forgive, meaning that we will begin to perceive life - leaving what has past behind us, rather than carrying it always with us.

2. Forgiveness is NOT desensitising to sin.

By forgiveness we don't condone sinful actions.

- Proverbs 8:13 - God hates sin!!
- Romans 12:2 - Do not be conformed to this world!
- 2 Corinthians 1:3,4 - God provides comfort, then extends the same task to us - to be messengers of comfort.

"As with any human trait, some people are naturally more forgiving than others... more forgiving types tend to have higher levels of agreeableness and lower levels of neuroticism. People who have a tendency to ruminate are generally less quick to forgive, since they are more likely to hold onto grudges or hurt feelings... People who have a religious faith also seem to have an upper hand in forgiving. "All of the major religions value forgiveness." <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2017/01/ce-corner>

People who forgive well are more pleasant to be around than those who do not.

Why then does strife seem to be normative in our churches? Why are we cliquy? Why do we hold grudges? Why are family problems so common?

Ephesians 4:31,32 - Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Conclusion:

Anthony Ray Hinton - was arrested on a hot day in July of 1986... He spent 28 years in jail for a crime he did not commit.

When expressing his innocence to the arresting police he was told: "I don't care whether you did it or not. You will be convicted."

And so he was, convicted to death row...he saw 54 men pass his cell to be executed, he knew of 22 suicides during his stay in prison...

He went to spend 28 years in jail awaiting his execution, until proof was given that, indeed, they got the wrong man.

Speaking of his accusers he says:

"I've never had an apology, but I forgave those involved in my conviction long before I left prison. I didn't forgive them so they can sleep well at night. I did it so I can."