

Forgive Like God

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- [0 : 0 0] So let us go to God one more time, ask for his help, and then let's listen to his word. Heavenly Father, this morning I just pray that it will not be my words, but it will be your word that will be heard.
- Help me not to say anything that is not from you, that is wrong, but pray that you will grant clarity to us and you will grant conviction so that we might live the way that you want us to, that we might develop the habits that you want us to practice.
- All this we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen. Three of the hardest words in the English language are the words, I am sorry.
- Because when we do so, we are really saying, I screwed up. I was wrong. I accept the blame. And that is uncomfortable for us.
- To say sorry often means having to confront our personal flaws, to admit that we are not the selfless person we thought ourselves to be. It means other people can now hold our sin against us.
- [1 : 2 0] And that makes us feel vulnerable. No wonder those three words are so tough to say. But believe it or not, they might actually be three even harder words to say.
- And those are the words, I forgive you. You see, saying sorry at least leaves the door open for forgiveness.
- And if you get that, what a relief. What a weight off your shoulders. But what if it is you doing the forgiving?
- That's different, isn't it? Forgiving can seem completely one-sided. You are the one who has been wounded. And yet you are choosing not to give back what only seems fair.
- It feels weak. No wonder C.S. Lewis famously said, Everyone thinks forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive.
- [2 : 2 3] So of all the sermons in this series, this is actually the one I'm most nervous about. Speaking about forgiveness is hard. And in a congregation this size, I know there will be people who have been hurt very deeply, where words have been said, and things have been done, which should not have been said and done.
- But it has. There is no turning back the clock. And to even hear about forgiveness, never mind doing it, is a real struggle.
- And maybe that's why I've never ever felt ready to preach an entire sermon just on forgiveness. It feels too difficult. And yet, over the last six months, I felt increasingly convicted that we need to hear what God says about this.
- If we want our relationships to thrive, we have to learn to forgive like God. And so this morning, I aim to give you a broad and systematic overview of this habit of grace with Matthew 18 as our anchor passage.
- Now, as I do so, I wouldn't be able to touch on every question or every scenario, but I hope to set enough of the big picture in place. And my prayer is that the Holy Spirit will use this time to make sure he is heard and that our hearts begin to change.

[3 : 56] So this is how we're going to proceed this morning. We will ask these four questions. Why should we even forgive? What gets in the way of forgiveness? What is forgiveness actually?

And how can I forgive? So firstly, why should we even forgive? What makes it vital for the Christian? And basically, the Bible's big answer is this.

Because forgiven people forgive others. Forgiven people forgive others. In Matthew 18 verse 21, Peter asked Jesus, Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me?

Notice what Peter assumes. First off, he assumes we will be sinned against. The truth is we can't live in this world very long without being hurt. The reality of a fallen world means that we will sin against others and others will sin against us.

And notice he assumes, rightly, that even his fellow Christians will hurt him, whether intentionally or unintentionally. It will happen.

[5 : 11] And then notice, he assumes that forgiveness is what he's supposed to do as a follower of Christ. But here is his question, one I suspect is on our minds as well.

What's the limit? How many times before it gets a bit too much? And Peter decides to make an educated guess. Is it seven times?

Now that's pretty generous, right? You see, the rabbis then used to say, you can forgive up to three times. Three times before you can say, that's it.

Enough. But now Peter doubles that and adds one more for good measure. Pretty good, eh? But Jesus says, verse 22, well, actually, Peter, you've got to put another seven besides your seven, or perhaps, as in the footnote, you've got to multiply it by 70 times more.

But whichever way it is, Jesus is making the same point. There is no limit. The point isn't to keep track of the number of times you've forgiven, but to keep on forgiving at every opportunity.

[6 : 29] In Genesis 4, Lamech, Lamech, the son of Cain, took revenge by killing a man who had wounded him. And he declared, I will seek revenge 77 times over for anyone who dares hurt me.

But now Jesus says, if Lamech seeks revenge 77 times over, you do the exact opposite.

Be as extravagant in forgiving as Lamech was in avenging. But why forgive this much, Jesus?

Why be so extravagant with us? Well, Jesus says, let me tell you a story, verses 23 to 27. There is a king. That's God.

And there is a servant. That's us. And we're in big trouble because we owe this king 10,000 bags of gold. So let me do the maths for you.

[7 : 35] Think 1MDB scandal. How much does 1MDB still owe its creditors? Conservatively, let's say 7.8 billion US dollars at the very least.

Now, how much does this servant owe? At least 100 1MDBs. Perhaps even more. The point is, there is no hope of doing anything about it.

The chances of us repaying this is less than 0%. All we can do is to get on our knees, begging for mercy, because we are completely powerless to repay this debt and avoid the penalty.

But the king then does something amazing. He knows that the only way to meet this man's need is for him to show mercy and grace. And that is exactly what he does.

He forgives hundreds of billions of debt. It's all cancelled. You're released, he says. No need to pay. And that, Jesus says, is a picture of what God has done for you and I.

[8 : 53] That is a picture of the gospel. You see, sin leaves us with a debt before God we cannot satisfy. But the gospel tells us that debt is now totally forgiven in Christ, even though we did absolutely nothing to deserve it.

And that is the heart of the gospel. Gospel people, Christians, are extravagantly forgiven.

But that is not the end of the story for in verses 28 to 30 there is a second scene with a second servant. And as it turns out, this servant also owes some money to the first servant and he owes him a hundred denarii which would be a few months' wages.

And so the second servant also begs for mercy. In fact, verse 29, he says the exact same thing the first servant said to the king back in verse 26.

Be patient with me, he begged. But does the first servant act like the king? No way! He has the second servant thrown into prison.

[10 : 12] There is no hesitation on his part. Now, how do you feel listening to this? Disgusted, most probably.

But here is Jesus' point. The second servant actually represents all those who have sinned against us. And when we refuse to forgive, Jesus says we are behaving exactly like the first servant in verses 28 to 30.

Why should we forgive? Because when we don't, we become distorted images of God failing to reflect what our king is like.

You see, if we are Christians, we are gospel people, which means we are forgiven people. And because forgiveness lies at the heart of the gospel, forgiven people forgive others.

that is the basic moral logic Jesus is expounding here. And actually, we can sharpen that. You see, did you notice verses 28 to 30 comes right after verses 23 to 27?

[11 : 33] What I mean is this. The story of how this servant refuses to forgive this relatively small debt only comes after we have been first told the story of how his huge debt had been incredibly forgiven.

In other words, what Jesus is showing us is that no matter what someone has done to offend us, it will always pale in comparison to what you and I have done to God himself.

And yet, we have been incredibly forgiven this huge offense. How then can we not forgive others? Now, we have to be careful here.

I am not saying that human beings do not sometimes suffer grievous harm or great injustices. I am not saying that human beings don't sometimes do really horrible things to other human beings.

I read the news too. I get very upset hearing about underage teenagers being allowed to drive on the road without a license and causing people to die.

[12 : 52] as a pastor, occasionally I have to hear very unpleasant stuff. So I am not downplaying the gravity of an offense committed against you.

But, I am trying to magnify the gravity of the offense we commit against God. You see, the trouble with me and you is that sometimes we think our sin against God is not such a big deal.

And, therefore, his forgiveness of us isn't anything amazing. But, Jesus says differently. Our sin is of the magnitude of 10,000 bags of gold, of 100 plus 1 MDBs.

Or, let us try a different calculation. Let's say I only sin five times a day. I've lived on this earth for 40 years, so I've sinned against our good and amazing God at least 73,000 times.

Let's face it, sinning only five times a day, who am I kidding? It should be way more than that. How many times have I taught something bad, said something bad, did something bad?

[14 : 11] But in Christ, God has forgiven it all. There is no limit to his forgiveness. So what should we do when another person commits just one sin against us?

That is why we forgive. In fact, Jesus gives a warning. He says there are serious consequences if we do not forgive. Verses 32 to 35. Upon hearing what the servant does, the king decides to withdraw his mercy and gives this servant his deal.

And Jesus says, verse 35, this is how my heavenly father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.

Now that might shock us. Is Jesus saying you get forgiven by God only by forgiving? Is he saying that it is salvation by works after all? Not quite.

Notice even in this parable that the king forgives the first servant well before we see the servant's response to others. God's forgiveness is prior and he makes the first move, something we see over and over again in scripture.

[15 : 31] Rather, Jesus' point is the big point I've been making all this time. Forgiven people forgive others. If we know how God has treated us, it will inevitably change the way we treat others.

Forgiving others is not a precondition of our salvation, but a product of our salvation. And if we are stuck in unforgiveness, then the question is, could it be you never really knew Jesus in the first place?

Could it be that you never actually understood and accepted the gospel even if you've heard it many times? And as a result, could you still be headed for hell?

That is what an attitude of unforgiveness can reveal. That is Jesus' point. Because forgiven people forgive others.

That's what the scriptures consistently say. We seek to forgive the way God forgives us. Now just take a look at these other verses, for example, on the screen. Ephesians 4 verse 32.

[16 : 45] Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you. Or Colossians 3 verse 13. Bear with each other and forgive one another.

If any of you has a grievance against someone, forgive as the Lord forgave you. Now that is the big challenge of this parable. But as we all know, it's really hard, isn't it?

Which brings us to our second question. What gets in the way of forgiveness? Well, let me mention three obstacles. Firstly, there is of course our pain and anger.

Whenever someone wrongs us, we feel hurt. We hurt emotionally, and sometimes it even manifests itself physically, like when we feel the hurt so much that it's like a punch to the stomach.

And hurt often turns into anger. Indeed, if the person is close to us, the pain cuts even deeper. The last thing we feel like doing is forgive.

[18 : 00] Instead, often we find first of all that our minds go on a playback loop. The wrong you have done just keeps on playing again and again in my mind, like those slideshows you often see at wedding dinners.

My brain becomes like a bad TikTok algorithm that only shows variations of the same painful video. And then second of all, I find myself wanting payback.

You know, quite simply, you've heard me, and now I want to make you pay for it. I want you to experience the pain I've experienced. If you have slandered me and affected my reputation amongst others, then I want someone to also spread malicious lies about you and see how you like it.

It's what you deserve. That's what goes on in our hearts. And then third of all, I keep snacking on the poison of bitterness.

someone once memorably said that bitterness is like drinking poison and hoping someone else will die. Even if I am no longer in close proximity to you, you know, I find I want the grudge, almost in the same way I want chocolate or I want a drink, I even offer that snack to others sometimes to have them taste my indignation and my resentment so that they can take my side.

[19 : 28] After all, snacking together can be more fun than snacking individually, right? And sometimes it can take over my entire life. And all of this, of course, creates an impossible environment for forgiveness because this cocktail of hurt and anger has no place for grace.

But let me briefly suggest two more reasons. Secondly, our cultural context can make it difficult to forgive. John Tran is a pastor in Hong Kong who has done some research into how our Asian cultural context can influence our perceptions of forgiveness.

And to summarize his findings in very, very simple terms, basically, Asian cultures value hierarchy and harmony over direct confrontation.

and that can make apologizing and forgiving tricky, especially if it involves older and younger parties. If there is a contentious issue, the safeguarding of social harmony is sometimes prioritized over proper resolution.

social harmony is risky in the long run because true social harmony is only possible where there is a reasonable degree of fairness and justice.

[20 : 57] In the end, he says, authentic forgiveness has to go beyond social harmony, submission, and face saving. But because these are often deeply ingrained cultural values, they can sometimes get in the way of confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

And then thirdly, our lack of clarity on what forgiveness actually is can also make it difficult because we might think we are being called to do things we are not actually called to do.

which brings me to our third question for today. What is forgiveness actually? And I think one really helpful way to start getting at what forgiveness is, is by clarifying what forgiveness is not.

So firstly, forgiveness or forgiving is not pretending. It's not pretending nothing wrong has happened. It's not pretending we were not hurt. If it was, then forgiving is simply about faking it, which it clearly is not.

Did God pretend nothing wrong had happened when Adam and Eve listened to the serpent? The fact is, forgiveness is only needed if there has been a wrong.

[22 : 23] If there is no wrong, there is no need for forgiveness. And when we pretend there is no wrong, we can make the pain worse because we are denying a remedy is needed.

Forgiving is not pretending. And then secondly, forgiving is not excusing. It's not saying it's okay when in fact it is not okay.

If someone cheated or bullied you, to forgive is not the same as saying that cheating and bullying in itself was okay. It's not trying to minimize the significance of the offense.

As the Christian counselor Brad Hambrick notes, when we say, I forgive you, we are saying the only thing that could make right what you did was Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross.

In other words, when we forgive, we are identifying your wrongdoing as significant enough to require Jesus himself to be your advocate.

[23 : 40] My offense and your offense needed the Son of God to die in our place. Forgiveness is not excusing.

And thirdly, forgiving is not forgetting. We often hear Jeremiah 31 verse 34, don't we, on the screen, where God promises, for I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

It's at the end of Jeremiah 31, 34. But what God is doing here isn't exactly the same as forgetting, as if his memory is suddenly wiped out.

No, it is more active than that. So take Psalm 130 verse 3 to 4, for instance, on the screen. If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness so that we can, with reverence, serve you. And the point is that God doesn't write down a list of wrongs which he keeps referring back to every time he sees or thinks of you.

[24 : 51] when we forgive, we are not undoing history, which is impossible anyway. We're not forgetting like that. But what we are doing is not rehearsing the offence and referring to it over and over again.

And then fourthly, forgiving is not a feeling. Now this is really important because this is one of the most common misunderstandings. forgiveness is not simply what happens privately and emotionally within a person.

Forgiving involves feelings but it's not in itself a feeling. It is not simply trying to stop feeling resentful. This idea is sometimes known as therapeutic forgiveness where forgiveness simply becomes all about your emotional health.

But as we will see a little later on, there is more to it than that. And thinking of forgiveness in purely therapeutic terms is unhelpful because it makes the main focus for forgiveness me and my hurt, my feeling of hurt, rather than the problem of sin.

It becomes subjective, not objective. And that is a clue we are going theologically off track. And then fifthly, forgiving is not consequence free.

[26 : 17] forgiving someone doesn't mean that they don't suffer any consequences as a result of their wrongdoing. They are still held responsible for their actions. If they have cheated on a test, they can be forgiven, but they might still need to have points deducted.

If they have betrayed you, they might have to suffer the consequence of not enjoying the same level of trust from you that they did before. And so that is what forgiveness is not.

But what is forgiveness then? Or perhaps more precisely, what is biblical forgiveness? Well, notice earlier in Colossians and Ephesians that we are to forgive as God forgave us.

In other words, we model our forgiveness after his, while allowing for the fact that he is God and we are not. And if so, then what is forgiveness?

Firstly, forgiveness is other-centered. When we look at God's forgiveness, we realize that he actively pursues sinners in order to forgive them for their benefit.

[27 : 29] That's what the king in Matthew 18 does, doesn't he? Contrary to a lot of the world's thinking, he doesn't forgive to make himself feel better or heal from the wounds that we have inflicted upon him.

No. Forgiveness, you see, is interpersonal. Yes, it can have personal emotional benefits, but that is merely a by-product, not the essence of forgiveness.

Forgiveness is other-centered. Secondly, forgiveness is a decision that is gracious, though undeserved. It is a choice you make, an act of the will by the grace of God, regardless of your feelings.

Again, consider the king in Matthew 18. What is he doing? He is choosing to cancel the servant's debt. He is making a decision.

In fact, one of the primary Greek words which is translated as forgive in our Bibles is the word *afiemi*, which simply means to let loose or to release from legal or moral obligations and consequences.

[28 : 43] And that's what the king is doing. He is choosing to release the servant from their debt. Notice again that the king isn't acting as if the debt never happened, so pretending and forgetting, or giving another loan to the servant, or suggesting that he carries out another business venture, so not saying that there are no consequences or there is immediate restoration of trust, but he is deciding not to leverage the person's offence, but to voluntarily let it go.

He is giving up his right to some form of repayment, not because the person deserves it, but because he is motivated by grace. And as a result, forgiveness is costly.

There's a great cost. There's no getting around it. You see, to continue the metaphor of a debt, when a wrong has been done, someone has to pay, doesn't he?

Either the servant or the king has to pay the debt. And that is true in all situations of wrongdoing, even when no money is involved. When you are sinned against, you lose something.

Maybe it's your happiness or your peace of mind or some opportunity. And only two things can happen. Either you make the other person pay back in some form, or you forgive, refuse payback, and you absorb the cost yourself.

[30 : 15] And that is what forgiveness is. It is choosing to bear the cost yourself, which is, of course, what the king does. Just imagine the impact to his treasury.

But he bears that cost, as Jesus did, on the cross. And then fourthly, forgiveness is an ongoing commitment.

When you release your right to inflict judgment on that person, it is not just a one-off thing. You are actually committing not to dwell on the offense. You are not, as I said earlier, rehearsing the offense over and over again in your mind.

You are not brooding over that record of wrong, just as God doesn't brood over yours. Now, of course, sometimes you can't help but think of the wrong that someone did to you.

Sometimes there might be a trigger of some sort. You hear a song or you watch a scene on TV and then it brings back some unwanted memory. Someone in a conversation mentions something and you remember the wrong that has been done against you.

[31 : 21] But to forgive means that whenever that happens, you commit not to stay there. When you remember, you don't ruminate.

And forgiveness is an ongoing commitment not to bring up the wrong again and use it against the other person and wish them ill. It is a commitment not to keep talking about it to others or to post your grievances all over social media.

If that's what you are doing, you have not truly forgiven. As James 4 verse 11 says, anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it.

When you judge the law, you are not keeping it but sitting in judgment on it. In other words, you are improperly taking over God's rightful authority as judge by the way you continually inflict judgment.

And it is a commitment not to let the person's wrong define them. Think about the worst thing you have done. Now imagine if the only thing you are ever known for is that very thing.

[32 : 40] But if your offender is a brother or sister in Christ, Christ has already declared that is not what they are defined by. Rather, they are defined by his declaration of no condemnation.

They are defined by his declaration they are a new creation. That is not who they are any longer. And so when you forgive, you commit to defining them the way Jesus sees them.

Otherwise, you are challenging Jesus' definition. declaration. And then fifthly, forgiveness is multi-dimensional. Always seeking reconciliation or recognizing reconciliation is not always possible.

Now this is really important to understand because this is where a lot of the confusion lies. You see, I think it's helpful to think of forgiveness as made up of more than one dimension. On the one hand, there is what some theologians call attitudinal forgiveness, that is to do with your attitude.

That's when you have already committed before God to forgive the other person, regardless of whether that person recognizes or admits they have done wrong. Jesus speaks of this dimension in Mark 11 verse 25.

[34 : 02] And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them so that your Father in Heaven may forgive you your sins.

And if we are talking about this dimension, then our forgiveness is to be unconditional, although maybe I'm thinking that is maybe not the best word to use.

But it means we are always ready to forgive, as Matthew 18 tells us. After all, that's what God is like, isn't he? He is always ready to forgive.

His capacity to forgive is endless. God is infinitely generous in his offer of forgiveness, such that if we genuinely ask forgiveness from him, it will not be denied.

And we do the same with others. In this sense, we are to forgive unconditionally. That is in the sense of offering it out. But, and this is really important, there is another dimension to forgiveness, which is what some theologians call transactional forgiveness.

[35 : 11] Again, listen to how Jesus describes it in Luke 17, verse 3 and 4. If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them. And if they repent, forgive them.

Even if they sin against you seven times in a day, and seven times come back to you saying, I repent, you must forgive them. Now, notice this time that Jesus envisions not just you and God, but you and another person.

One person is confronted with their sin, and upon expressing repentance, the offended is to release the offender from their offense.

But notice this time, there is a condition, and that is repentance. repentance. If there is no repentance, forgiveness cannot be completed because its goal has not been accomplished.

And isn't this how the gospel works? You see, God's goal in forgiveness is always reconciliation, the bringing together of two parties who formerly have been separated.

[36 : 16] And that's what 2 Corinthians 5, verse 19 is driving at, that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them, and he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

But the thing is, God doesn't automatically grant forgiveness. Otherwise, everyone will be safe, just like that. We will have universalism.

Rather, receiving God's forgiveness requires us to repent. Just take 1 John 1, verse 9, for example, a verse that we've become familiar with over the last few weeks.

1 John 1, verse 9. If, so notice the condition, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

And so when we forgive, we are always seeking reconciliation. The two go together. but that can only be truly accomplished when the offender repents.

[37 : 24] And this mirrors how God forgives us. His offer of grace is always free, always available, but we only experience full reconciliation with him through repentance.

so if someone refuses to repent, the relationship remains broken. The transaction of forgiveness, if I can put it that way, cannot be completed.

You cannot shake hands alone. You need two people for that to happen. In fact, the verses right before the parable that we look at makes that clear.

Matthew 18 verse 17 says that a church must treat any persistently unrepentant sinner as a non-Christian. That is, as someone still unforgiven, someone still unreconciled to God.

And the truth is, in a fallen world, sometimes the offence has caused such great harm and distress that even where there is forgiveness and repentance, the reconciled relationship might still require many boundaries.

[38 : 42] For instance, like when the victim of an abuser still has to limit contact with that person. Complete repair might only take place in the new creation.

So I hope that gives you some clarity and I know time is running short but I must try to at least answer our final question for today. How can we forgive? Now here are a few things to remember.

One, determine whether this is a matter that needs to be taken up or not. You see, remember forgiveness is only necessary where there is actual wrong.

A mere disagreement, if there is no sin involved, does not require forgiveness. So for instance, if you simply have differing views on a political candidate or how to handle a particular problem, then forgiveness is not relevant there.

There is no moral violation. So check first whether there is an actual wrong. wrong. But more than that, we also need to ask, how sure am I on this matter that I am right?

[39 : 55] Even if you were genuinely offended, right and wrong might not be immediately clear. And in fact, when it is not clear, sometimes that is a clue in itself that any perceived offence is a minor one.

And here it is helpful to recognise that the Bible has another category besides forgiveness that should also come into play.

And that is the category of forbearance. Now consider some of these following verses. Look at the screen. Be completely humble and gentle. Be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Ephesians 4 verse 2. A person's wisdom yields patience. It is to one's glory, to overlook an offence. For verse 19 verse 11. Above all, love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 4 verse 8. And so the Bible consists of a category where two things could be happening. One, you could recognise that a person is not so much sinning against you but simply displaying his or her particular weakness.

[41 : 09] For instance, they might be sincerely a very forgetful person, something like that. That's their weakness. Or two, the offence itself is minor enough that really there is no need to go and have a conversation with them about it.

You just overlook it. Your love covers it. It is just a matter of loving forbearance. But how do you know if the offence is not minor?

Again, it requires wise judgement and discernment but again, here are some questions to help you get started. Is it something that has disrupted your relationship to such an extent that you are beginning to get into that mode of playback and playback?

Now, that is probably a sign that you need to go and sort out with the other person? Or is this not just a one-off but a consistent pattern of behaviour? That is another clue.

And then two, before you go to the person, go to the cross and leave justice to God. You see, if forgiveness is about releasing the debt, how can we do that? And I think the only way is to meditate on the cross.

[42 : 26] It is to cry out to God to make the forgiveness we have received from him real to us. It is to understand how much we owe God, how great a price he paid.

Because when we know how greatly we have been forgiven, then we can more readily forgive others. And it is also to leave justice to him.

You see, here is the good news of Christianity. It is that there is an objective moral standard in this universe, has been put into place by the moral lawgiver himself. So that means even when I release any personal retaliation that I want to impose on the offender, I know that standard still exists.

It names evil as evil without ever downplaying it. And I know there is a God who will ensure that standard of justice will be enforced in the end.

And so I don't have to worry about justice never being carried out in the final reckoning. As Romans 12 19 21 says, I can then leave room for God's wrath and just concentrate on overcoming evil with good.

[43 : 45] God and God and God and God and God and God didn't overlook sin but paid for it himself.

And if the one who has offended me truly repents, it does not mean that what he did doesn't matter or wasn't evil, but that God has sufficiently!

dealt with it. He has already sacrificed his own son. And so I am free to offer him forgiveness. And then after that tree, you can go to the person remembering what forgiveness actually is and seek to forgive.

You make that decision to make that commitment and reconcile where possible. But there is just one last thing I must mention and that is remember forgiveness is usually a journey.

It doesn't happen overnight. The truth is sometimes someone might come to you and say, I'm sorry, I admit responsibility, I'm going to change, will you forgive me?

[44 : 59] And the repentance is genuine. But sometimes you are not quite ready yet to forgive. Now, you want to get to that place, you want to obey God.

You know forgiven people forgive others. You don't want to say, I won't forgive. But the wound is fresh. And it helps if we conceive of forgiveness as a journey.

And so if you are in that place, you can say, brother, sister, I want to forgive. I know I need to. But I'm just not quite there yet.

but I am willing to commit to the process. Just give me a bit of time so that God can help me to forgive. And that is okay.

Forgiveness can be a journey that you need to take to get to your destination. And as long as you're committed to walking that way, God will help you.

[46 : 01] And if you are the person who has hurt that person, sometimes you have to give a bit of time and space for the other person to process, first you can't demand instant forgiveness.

But if you are both committed to the journey, then something beautiful can happen. So this has been a weighty sermon, I know. I feel it too.

I understand there might still be some unanswered questions, it's just impossible to talk about everything, but feel free to come and have a conversation with me afterwards. But I hope that the word today has also brought fresh clarity and a fresh resolve to cultivate this habit of grace.

For this is where we truly demonstrate whether we are Christ followers or not. Let's take a moment and then let's pray.

The musicians can start coming up already. heavenly father, there are so many things to process, I'm sure, from what you've taught us today.

[47 : 16] So many things that we recognize is a struggle, it's difficult, I find it difficult. But father, I just pray that you also give us assurance that your Holy Spirit is with us and because your Holy Spirit is with us, we can forgive, if we can forgive like you.

Today, if there is any confessing or forgiving or apologizing that needs to be done, I pray that people will begin that journey, people will begin to commit to that journey.

So I pray that you'll be at work and bearing fruit in our congregation. We pray all this in the name of Christ. Amen.