

Forgiven-ing
Matthew 18:15-22
5/9/2021
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It's good to be with you. My name is PD Mayfield. I serve as one of the pastors here at Columbia Presbyterian. It is good to see Dr. Wayne Koch and Debbie back in town, one of our partner missionaries and fellow members here at CPC. And, also, welcome to all the mothers and aunts and older sisters that we have in our lives. And we give praise to how God cares for us through the mothers and women in our lives.

As you're turning in your Bible, you can turn to the gospel of Matthew. We'll be looking at Matthew 18:15-22 this morning. We are continuing a sermon series looking at "Qualities of a Disciple." And this morning, we will be looking at forgiveness. Much of what every week's service is hinging on is our need for forgiveness from God our Father through the Lord Jesus Christ upon His death upon the cross. But the implications of the gospel are that we pursue peace and unity with one another. And what does that look like to experience forgiveness and to extend forgiveness to one another as we are empowered from the gospel?

Follow along as I read this morning from Matthew 18.

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times." [ESV]

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

We're going to do something different today. I'm just going to start listing people's sins to the church. How uncomfortable would that be, right?

As we look at forgiveness this morning, it is something that is true of the human story. If you think about it, the human story is really one of mending broken relationships. It makes up our novels. It shows up in our movies, in our shows. And we resonate with it deeply in our fiction. We're inspired by it in nonfiction because it resonates in our heart of what we long for in our lives.

Consider a man who in his anger lashes out with a critical word to his child. And in that moment that kind of scares him, he realizes maybe for the first time how he has been impacted by his own words to him 20 years earlier. Or consider a worker who tells just a little white lie to protect himself and protect his job, but the consequence of that is that his co-worker and friend actually gets fired. And that friend kind of puts two and two together and feels very betrayed. Or what about a child who is growing up with the over abundant gushing love of her mother when things go right and the cold disappointment

when she falls short? And these are just three little made-up vignettes that I think are in our stories. I know because they're in my story. I know that they're in the stories of people I interact with all the time.

I think people in general have a hard time with forgiveness, and especially, I think Christians are notoriously bad at forgiveness. And I think Christians are particularly bad because forgiveness is at the very center of our religion and our faith. So we know we're supposed to. We know it's happening. It's working out some way. We say it. We ask for forgiveness. It's just ho-hum a lot of the time. And so we put a spiritual veneer, but we may not be going down deeper into the depths of the work that forgiveness entails. We sometimes say, "I forgive you with my words," but deep down in my heart, I say, "I'm not yet forgiving you."

In a recent essay by Tim Keller, he discusses influences that make forgiveness challenging in our current day. One of those influences that he discusses is what he calls our therapeutic culture. Now, of course there's nothing wrong with therapy. I practiced as a counsellor myself. There are many positive aspects that have come through the years with that. First and foremost, just minimizing the stigma of needing help. That is a positive good as well as further understanding of how we have been impacted by our family of origin and exploring our motivations and behaviors in order to better improve our lives and our mental health. So it's not throwing all of therapeutic culture, if we were to use that phrase, under the bus. But he is drawing a particular focus or emphasis when he talks about it.

But this sense of forgiveness kind of being hard or forgiveness having particular challenges in our day, we're flooded with the depravity that we experience in our own hearts. We're flooded by watching it constantly in a 24-hour news cycle. Circumstances involving mass shootings, they starkly confront us with thinking what would it be like if we were in that position, or what's it like if we are indirectly related to this situation by, you know, two or three degrees of separation. In those circumstances, we rightly empathize with victims and the victim's families. We rightly call out for justice for the murder.

That level of confronting makes sense, right? But what startles us is when someone who's experienced such tragedy extends forgiveness. Does it not? Even for Christians, with the passage we've just read, that's what we do, and yet it still startles us. For example, some of the members of the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston extended forgiveness to the killer. Similarly, there was an Amish schoolhouse a number of years ago where there was a shooting in Pennsylvania, and in the midst of that tragedy, members of that community went and extended condolences to the killer's family for their loss. What motivates a person to forgive?

In reflection on that Amish shooting, some scholars have written and made the observation that the power to forgive comes from a community that gives shape to self-renunciation. Tim Keller in his essay explains or kind of qualifies self-renunciation this way. It's the phenomenon of "giving up your perfect right to pay back to the person what they did to you. It's "giving up your perfect right to pay back to the person what they did to you." The reason why Tim Keller is particularly emphasizing on how the therapeutic culture becomes a challenge to forgiveness is what he goes on to say. In observing how when a person or a community is actually nourishing revenge, you get what Dr. Keller says, "In a therapeutic culture, forgiveness is seen as self-hating, and revenge and anger will be seen as more authentic as long as you do not let the anger become too unpleasant for your inner psychological wellbeing."

So what's your experience with forgiveness? My experience, my natural intuition is that I want mercy for me, and I want justice for you. But Jesus calls His disciples to another way. A quality that He cultivates in His disciples is what I am calling "forgiven-ing." The call of the Christian life is knowing you are forgiven in Christ Jesus and cultivating a love that is forgiving to others. Today, we'll look at three key things that describe how a Christian is to walk a life of forgiveness from this passage. We'll look at the process briefly, the authority, and the motivation.

First, the process. You may be familiar with this. This is a classic passage. If you look at verses 15 through 17, this process in the big picture really just summarizes the pathway in three steps. Step one, go to your brother or sister. Step two, go to your brother; take others with you. Step three, go to the church about your brother. Now, each step is meant to stop at that step, and you only move up to the next step if the previous step is still needing to be worked out.

So a couple observations. This process implies relationship. Jesus is speaking with His disciples, and so He's implying that there's relationship within the community of believers. But the term "brother" is actually a warmer word, but it can be a broader term to include commonalities such as friendship or neighbors. But there's a relationship that's been breached. There is a tearing. There is a strain within the relationship. This process suggests that some transgression has taken place to create that strain or to create that rendering. Jesus gives the occasion of when a person has been sinned against. Now, this could be taken in a broad sense such as making a mistake or missing the mark of some custom or some sort of human law. But it also carries a more narrow sense of a moral wrong that goes against God's divine law and impacts the offended person. Jesus doesn't give too much specificity in His teaching here, but the process itself is what is laid out for us to then be how we negotiate and how we navigate, how we discern what has been offended, what hasn't. It's a process of talking. It's a process of understanding what is going on between these individuals.

And lastly, this process offers a way to mend that relationship. So Jesus instructs the offended person to express, to communicate how the other person's action has given the offense. Now, there are two sides to this coin. On one side, the offended person brings the situation to light. Now why that might be? Because how often have you been told, "Hey, you did something to me," and you're like, "What? I didn't know I was doing that. Thank you for letting me know," right? So the communication on one side is really to bring it to light. "You might not be aware of it, and so let me tell you how you've hurt me." On the other side of the coin, it's so that truth can avail and that the offending person can take responsibility for her actions and make the amends. Truth telling gives dignity to both sides, to the wounded and to the wounder. And the truth that you're stepping into, this truth telling is inviting the two persons who are at odds and are not in perfect fellowship to walk a path to have re-fellowship, to have unity once again, to experience peace once again. And the goal is to gain your friend, to gain your brother, and not for the friendship to be lost.

So it's a beautiful moment, disciple of Christ, to think about your forgiven-ing. Is there anyone in your life that you need to extend this invitation? This invitation for their repentance, for their to recognize and acknowledge that things are not right between us, and I so want them to be. It is an invitation for them to consider their sin before God and their sin against you. It's an opportunity for mutual understanding about the transgression. You can have understanding, "Oh, I can see why you did that. It still hurt me. We can talk." We're working through it. And in that comes the outcome of a renewed flourishing in the relationship.

Another important question to consider is how might you need help in this process? Who among us know that "I need to go to my brother or sister," and it stops there? It's too terrifying to think about. It's too uncomfortable to engage. So how might you need help? Consider another friend or fellow believer you trust to walk with you through the process with that person. Are you stuck? Do you remain unreconciled? And that likewise grows out into that next level of interaction.

Sometimes step one fails because someone fails to repent. "I didn't do that," or "That's not true." And so now you've got to go to the next step because you got to say, "Well, he's denying it. So I've got evidence." And you're working through it. But sometimes it could be step one is not necessarily negative that they're unrepentant. Step one could be, "I don't know if I agree with that. I can see how that might

have offended you, but that wasn't my intent." So we need help to navigate that. So it's not all negative that we sometimes think of. The process has many positive attributes as well that we're perceiving rightly, that the truth is helping to reorient our understanding of the events or the words or the meaning. Help us in this way. We need other people to come alongside us.

And the most important question, I think, is how might you need to consider how you have sinned against another? We're very sensitive when we're sinned against. Remember, "I want mercy. I want to give you justice," right? But what Jesus in the gospel is inviting His disciples is in that space of consideration of our own sin, not necessarily "It's my sin that you sinned against me." No, no. It's not reverse blame shifting upon yourself. But it's a careful humble pondering of the depths of how sin is in my own heart because the beauty and the freedom that comes from confessing sin doesn't have to wait until someone approaches you. Now, that's the emphasis of this text. But there are other texts that say, "If you know your brother has something against you, you go to him." So the responsibility is upon everybody to consider how might I be reconciled with my brother or sister. You can go to them, you can acknowledge your fault, and you can seek to make amends.

Now, sometimes these interactions require short, quick words, conversations, and there's very fast repentance. And the next steps happen very quickly. Forgiveness is extended, and the relationship is renewed. And so forgiveness and reconciliation happen very close together side by side.

But sometimes interactions require long patient conversations because the wound goes deep or there is disagreement over the alleged transgressions. It takes longer. It carries its own exhaustion. It gives room for more sin to creep up of how we sin against each other, not because of the original offense, but because we get angry or frustrated or other ways that we might sin. So it takes time. It takes patience.

Sometimes forgiveness can be given, but reconciliation doesn't happen. Or at least it doesn't happen right now. And we'll come to that in the third point in a few moments today.

But either way, the process is important to practicing forgiven-ing. In that same essay that Tim Keller wrote, he describes why the church needs this practice, this process. He says, "The church is to be a foretaste of the future world of love and perfect community under the lordship of Jesus." Our sin inclines us to behavior that regularly weakens and breaks relationships, but through the Spirit, we are given the ability to realize partially, never fully in this life, but the ability to realize something of the beauty and joy of those future relationships through practices and disciplines of forgiveness and reconciliation now. Walking sometimes is painful and an uncomfortable process but is a foretaste of God breaking through and working. It's a foretaste of that love and perfect community under the lordship of Jesus.

You see, sisters and brothers, Jesus calls us to practice this process in private between individuals or maybe more public in various degrees of community. But at the core, the call is for disciples to grow in the wisdom, in the patience, in the discernment, and the courage to experience peacemaking in our own relationships. And one more step. And then also to grow in helping others to experience peacemaking in their relationships. So may we as the church pursue forgiven-ing in our relationships.

So the process, you know, can be straightforward. At some degree, we might be in this process all over the place in our relationships, whether informally or formally, small things, larger things. But the process is there. But it's important to root the process in a key concept, which is the authority. Verses 18-20, we see Jesus's authority, and we see how He extends His authority to forgive sins. That authority is extended to fellow believers. So it really is important to ask the question, who can forgive sins?

Do you remember? This very question gets posed in Matthew 9 when Jesus heals the paralytic. Even before Jesus heals him, He says these words, "Take heart, my son. Your sins are forgiven." He just

saw the faith of the men, and He just responds, "Your sins are forgiven." Of course, this upsets the religious leaders, and they were offended because they knew only God can forgive sins. Only God can cleanse the iniquity of sin. Only God can blot out transgressions. Who is this man who says he forgives this man? But to demonstrate that Jesus indeed had the authority to forgive, He said this. "For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, and walk'?" I don't know how long He waited. Sometimes I imagine that Jesus just waited for that uncomfortable silence. "Which one, guys? Which one's easier to say?" And then He says, "But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sin." He said, "Rise. Pick up your mat and go home." And the man rose, and he went home.

Jesus has the authority to forgive sins because He shares in the divinity of the Godhead who is holy and righteous, perfectly loving, perfectly in keeping with His covenant faithfulness. He alone makes atonement for our sin through His sinless life, His death upon the cross, and His glorious resurrection. Jesus Himself—we already looked at it. I think it was last week or the week before. Jesus Himself understood His purpose to be a ransom. Mark 10:45 and also the apostles Paul and John, for example, both describe Jesus as the propitiation of sins. That word "propitiation" just means that Jesus is the sin offering that removes guilt and forgives sins.

The authority of Christ to forgive sins we see in this passage is mysteriously extended to the church. Look again at verses 18 through 20, "Truly, I say to you," speaking to His disciples, "whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." There's this dynamic of when you are gathered together to make a judgment, "I'm with you." And so, again, He's not giving them authority to make judgments apart from Him. He's teaching them something about when they make judgments, "I am with you. I am the one that still makes propitiation. I am the one that still intercedes. I am the one that still forgives."

Now, various Christian traditions may live these passages out very differently from one another. For example, there are some churches that practice that "tell the church" to mean the whole congregation so that the whole church can make a judgment. Other churches practice more in the sense of the church kind of represents the church leaders, and the leaders make that judgment. Our church practices more of the latter, though there are sometimes reasons to still communicate more broadly to the wider congregation. But these things are happening informally, just relationally, and sometimes these things are happening more formally. But the goal, whether it's informal or whether it's formal, is for the restoration of the person who has committed the sin to Christ, but also the restoration in that relationship.

Regardless of your tradition, we have to acknowledge this. The church can do this poorly. We can judge wrongly. We can focus too much on the secondary things. We can neglect or ignore the primary things, the important matters. So it's incredibly important to understand that the scope of this delegated authority, again, is not apart from Christ, but it is issued from Christ. The church does not have the power in and of herself to make someone a Christian or make someone not a Christian. The authority that's discussed here in these verses is merely declaring something that is true, declaring what is being demonstrated, namely that this person remains unrepentant. The church is declaring that the person is living their life at odds with their profession of faith in Christ, and therefore, living their life as an unbeliever. They may be. They may not be. But it's declaring something is not right, not only in that relationship, but something is not right within the heart of the offender. And the role of this authority with the church leaders is to discern whether the person is out of step with the gospel and outside the visible church.

Now, Jesus goes on to use two categories, two labels, Gentiles and tax collectors, to describe this

judgment. On one hand, these labels do provide boundary markers for those who profess faith in Christ and those who do not. And yet, we have to ask an important question. How does Jesus interact with Gentiles and tax collectors? This is an incredibly important point to make. Although it can be very painful, incredibly sad when the church exercises this responsibility, what may be sometimes called excommunication, it's incredibly important to be reminded that it doesn't mean that such people are outside the reach of the gospel even then. Even in this last step, no one is outside the reach of God's saving grace and welcoming love. This is the gospel. God loves sinners, and He seeks to have them reconciled.

The responsibility, though, is given to church leaders. The responsibility does fall upon each of us. So whether you are experiencing the offense or the one making the offense, we're all called to pursue unity and peace. And why? What does the text say? Because Jesus says, "I am with you. I am among you. You can't say that we're good if you're not good with your brother." That's the implication that Jesus is driving at.

So do you recognize Jesus's authority to forgive your sin? We do at an intellectual level. But the call of the Christian is to revel in the power of truly how scandalous this gospel message is. Jesus says your sins are forgiven. Your sins are forgiven. Your sins are forgiven. Do you know the depth of your sin against God? Do you know the depth of sin against someone else? And do you even realize the depth of sin against yourself? And when you come into fuller awareness of the depth of our sin, how beautiful are those words, "Your sins are forgiven"? Do you welcome and do you receive by faith God's full pardon? Do you welcome and receive the complete cancellation of the debt of your sin? Of course, lament and confess your sins. But, brothers and sisters, rejoice and be glad that your sins are washed clean. This is why disciples must grow in forgiven-ing as a quality of the follower of Jesus. We know how we are forgiven, and we seek to grow in how we forgive others.

This brings us to the last point of the motivation. Initially, I had this point as the frequency because we're dealing with numbers of times here. This is verses 21 and 22. But it's more than frequency. It gets to the heart of the matter, the substance, the root, the essence of what's happening when we forgive because Peter gets what Jesus is saying. At least Peter, kind of in Peter's way that he always does, gets what Jesus is calling them to, something that he doesn't think maybe he can do. He's starting to smell what Jesus is cooking. You see, Peter's question is the right question to ask in light of all that Jesus has taught so far in chapter 18.

Earlier in chapter 18, Jesus refrains how we determine someone's greatness. Jesus honors children, and He seeks to protect them against the sins of others. Jesus reveals the Father's heart in how He rejoices by going after the one that has gotten away even more so than the 99 who never went astray. And we see Jesus caring about the way our relationships are strained to the point that He's like, "Here is a way to mend. Here is a way to repair."

And Peter begins to wonder, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. But how many times, Jesus? Okay. Yeah, yeah. Forgive. Forgive. Okay. I got it." Peter is actually kind of generous. He gives this kind of complete number, "Seven times?" Sometimes in rabbinical tradition, it might even say you forgive three times, and then on the fourth time, you don't have to. So at least Peter doesn't want to come across as someone who is missing what Jesus is saying even though he's kind of missing what Jesus is saying. But Jesus responds that the motivation of forgiveness comes from a compelling love that will do 77 times, or maybe your translation says 70 times 70. It's a complete number multiplied by a complete number. There's always one more time. When must I forgive, or how many times? At least one more time. This is the implications of Jesus's teaching here.

But it becomes very important to tease some things out there. Forgiving comes from that

compelling love that is willing. I believe all Christians are commanded by Jesus to be willing to forgive. But I also believe we sometimes confuse forgiving with reconciliation. Reconciliation comes from a trusting love that is ready. So it's differentiating between the unconditional and the conditional. I believe forgiveness is unconditional. That is straight out of the economy of God Himself that we are forgiven unconditionally. Now, the condition to activate and to receive that is by faith, to confess with our mouth and to receive by faith the forgiveness that Jesus offers. But there's no condition attached to it. There's nothing we must do. But reconciliation often brings conditions with it. It's the difference between something that is unconditional in our love but conditional in earning trust.

And this is why I think Christians can be so bad at forgiving. Because we know that we should forgive, we even want to forgive, but we confuse saying, "I forgive you," with everything's repaired. And sometimes that process has to be slowed down and stretched out. So the willingness of our heart to forgive but the readiness of us to be restored. That's an important part of this process.

Likewise, there is an evaluation that has to take place in this process. On one hand, we have to deal with the interaction between intent and impact. Just because I didn't intend to hurt you doesn't mean it didn't impact you, right? But intent does matter. "No, no, that's not what I meant." So now, again, the truth telling is what is brought out so we might come to better understanding of how we're interacting with each other and how we're impacting each other. "And even though my intent was not to hurt you, I recognize how I have harmed you, and I repent. Please forgive me." So that's in the offending party, evaluating intent and impact. That's important.

But likewise, in the heart of the person who has been offended against, we're evaluating the intersection between our willingness and our readiness. As I said, I believe Christians are called to be willing to forgive even when they're not ready. And so that doesn't mean that you're withholding forgiveness. It's actually just being honest because you're dealing with the wound. You're dealing with the harm. You're protecting yourself. Now, we protect ourselves, and in defensive mode, we often lash back, and our sins come to play. But to be willing to forgive and, by God's grace, coming into greater sense of readiness to forgive.

Now, there is a caution embedded into this dynamic. The one who withholds forgiveness of another. It's implied here later in the chapter. Jesus mentions it in other places in His teaching, particularly in the sermon on the mount with prayer. The one who withholds forgiveness of another, does that mean that then God withholds forgiveness of you? Well, kind of what's at play here is not that God is going to retract what He has offered to you. No. Actually, it's illuminating your heart because if you're withholding forgiveness of another, you're actually presuming upon the forgiveness given to you by God, but you are neglecting it to be given to someone else.

And so Jesus is just honest. And there's a challenging component of what He's saying here because He actually cares about your heart and the work that He's doing in you to forgive your sin. He's also helping you to grow in a sense of what that means for you to take the cost of what it means to incur that debt. If you think about that, depending on how you pray the Lord's prayer, our tradition says, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive those we are indebted to." You know what I mean.

We intuitively think of our relationships transactionally. I think that it spans cross-cultural. I don't think it's only one culture or other cultures don't. Maybe it's some cultures more so than others. But that sense of, "You've done something against me. You've got a debt in my book. I'm writing your name down until I can scratch it off." In Colossians, Paul talks about this. The very essence of forgiveness, the cancelling of the debt being nailed to the tree. What we are indebted to the Lord is forgiven because if it's not forgiven, it's paid back, and there is nothing we can do to pay back in the ways God has forgiven us.

So Jesus is calling His disciples to say, "Do not hold out to another what I don't ask of you." And that's the parable. That's the parable He goes into the rest of chapter 18. I commend it to you for reflection this afternoon. But the point of it is this, starting at verse 28. Jesus is speaking in hyperbole. He gives this exorbitant amount of money that all the hearers that are listening to Jesus teach would be like, "That is ridiculous. That's like no amount of money that anybody's going to have. So, wow, I can't believe how much that servant's been forgiven of his debt." But the servant then goes out and requires payment of those who owe him. Verse 29,

"So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'" [ESV]

You see, brothers and sisters, as we are growing in Christ, these qualities of discipleship are bearing fruit in our lives where we are growing in our forgiven-ing because we have experienced God's mercy. Why would we ever want to withhold that from someone else? Now, there's pain. There's abuse. There are things that you have to take into consideration. Again, teasing apart forgiveness and restoration. You can forgive someone who has harmed you and not trust them ever again. Jesus is not focusing on everything we could talk about, but there are real things you have to wisely discern in these situations.

There are other places in scripture that suggest that it's when someone asks for forgiveness, we forgive, and if they don't ask, I don't have to forgive. But the heart, the motivation is the forgiveness that you're extending may not even land with them, but it's what God is working in your heart to be loosed, to be free, to not only have the burden and the pain that you're experiencing but also seeking the good of that person. It's not because they get off Scott free but because you're actually wanting them to have God's mercy, for them to be reconciled to God and hopefully reconciled to you.

We mentioned in the beginning of stories. And at the very base human condition, I think the question of forgiveness in our experience really is a window into the brokenness of our lives. Who among us doesn't have some degree of relationship that's either broken completely or strained? This is the way of the cross. This is the way of the Christian as we seek to navigate it. And we need each other to do that as well. You see, we hurt people. People hurt us. But the good news, brother and sister, is that God forgives, God heals, and God restores. And the scriptures tell us the story of forgiveness, and the gospel calls people into a renewal that is brought through forgiveness.

Earlier this week, I was having a conversation with a young person, a child, let's say. This young person had a beautiful response to my question. I asked her, "What do you think of when you think of forgiveness?" And this is what the child said. "When Jesus sews up a broken heart." I think that child's right. And I pray. I pray for us, I pray for your relationships, and I pray for us as a church. May we experience how Jesus is sewing up broken hearts. May we be mended as we receive His forgiveness. May we contribute to the mending of others as we forgive them. And may we as disciples, may our reputation, may our experiences be with one another, but also to the watching world, may we grow in the ways we are known as forgiven-ers. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we do praise your glorious name, for out of the depth of our sin, you meet that fully and completely with the riches of your grace. Your mercy is poured out. Your kindness is

shown. And we are undone because we don't deserve it. And yet you are faithful and just. You are righteous and good. And your love, your love never runs out. May we know the fullness of your forgiveness, and may we grow in our ability, our willingness, our readiness, our interest in being people who forgive. We pray these things in Jesus's name. Amen.