

ORDER FOR THE CORPORATE WORSHIP OF GOD

A Service of Celebration and Covenantal Renewal

November 22, 2009

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM, 9:00 A.M.—

Michael, Brandon and Michelle Jean
children of Brent and Melissa Jean

Finley Ward Russell
child of Rann & Kristin Russell

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

CALL TO WORSHIP GOD

We gather to worship our God in spirit and in truth...

Psalm 103:8-13 - The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. ⁹ He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. ¹³ As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;...

WORSHIPPING GOD THROUGH SINGING

CONFESSING OUR GOSPEL FAITH—

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
the Maker of heaven and earth,
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
He descended into hell.
The third day He arose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand
of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge
the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit;
the holy catholic church;
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR NEED FOR THE GOSPEL TODAY— THE PASTORAL PRAYER

PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

MINISTRY OF THE WORD, PART 1

This Gospel:

Engaging the good news of Jesus—for heart and world

Colossians 1:6 - *All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.*

FORGIVENESS (Lesson 8, The Gospel-Centered Life)

I. The Wonder of Being Forgiven by God, from His Heart

Matthew 18:21-35 - Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" ²² Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. ²³ "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵ Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. ²⁶ "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷ The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. ²⁸ "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. ²⁹ "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' ³⁰ "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹ When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. ³² "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³ Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. ³⁵ "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Notes:

GIVING OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS—

MINISTRY OF THE WORD, PART 2

II. Strategies for NOT forgiving from our hearts. How we “choke” and demand payment from those who hurt and fail us, or “How You Too Can Be a Wicked Servant”.

In our dealing with the offender:

- We can drag out the past by rehearsing “the debtor’s” failures to them over and over and over. We can remember their sins against them with precision and passion. With words and body language, we can make them pay.
- We can be far more demanding and controlling of “the debtor” than we are with other people, all because "they owe us" and we want to keep them in debtor’s prison.
- We can punish with self-righteous "mercy" which makes them feel small, and makes us feel in control.
- We can avoid them, be cold to them in overt and/or subtle ways.
- We can actively seek and scheme to hurt or harm “the debtor”, taking from them something valuable to them—like their peace, joy and reputation.

In our dealing with others:

- We can run “the debtor” down to others, under the guise of "warning" people about them.
- We can run them down to others, under the guise of seeking sympathy and sharing our hurt.

In our dealing with ourselves:

- We can replay the tapes of what “the debtor” did to us, to justify our anger and hostility.
- We can "root" for their failure or fall or pain.
- We can stay away from the gospel, and avoid any strong memory of God’s mercy and grace for us. This will help us nurse our grudge and stay in control over “the debtor”.

(This section was adapted from Harbor Presbyterian Church's discipleship material. Thanks to Dick Kaufman and the Harbor family!)

SONG OF REFLECTION

MINISTRY OF THE WORD, PART 3

III. What is involved in our learning to “Forgive from the Heart”?

Living in the Gospel - Ephesians 4:32 - Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Living as a Sinner Needing Grace - Matthew 5:23-24 - “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

Living as a Generous Recipient of Grace -

Forgiveness is costly. It means canceling a debt when we feel we have every right to demand payment. It means absorbing the pain, hurt, shame and grief of someone else’s sin against us. It means longing for repentance and restoration. But this is exactly how God acted toward us in Jesus Christ. And through the gospel, the Holy Spirit empowers us to do the same towards others.

Living a Life of Gospel-Wisdom - *“Forgiveness involves a heart that cancels the debt but does not lend new money until repentance occurs.”*

Dan Allender

SONG OF RESPONSE

SPECIAL OFFERING—

MNA Minority Leadership Development

BENEDICTION

Luke 6:35-38 - But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What had the most impact on you today from our time in God’s worship and Word? What was encouraging, convicting, and/or calling for more clarification?
2. Respond to this statement: “God doesn’t forgive and forget. He forgives and remembers, but chooses not to remember our sins against us.” How does this encourage you? What other questions does it raise, for which the gospel alone is the answer? How can we demonstrate this kind of forgiveness towards one another, without becoming doormats?
3. How do you see yourself as a “wicked servant”? Go back and take a look at part 2 in the outline. Which parts of “wicked servanthood” are you most likely to practice?
4. How can we stay alive to the reality and enormity of the forgiveness we have in Jesus? Do we really believe God has forgiven all of our sins—past, present and future? What are the implications of knowing God has forgiven us from his heart? Why is this foundational to our forgiving others from our hearts?
5. What are some scenarios in which Dan Allender’s quote applies to you? Can you, appropriately, share a situation in which you need to cancel a debt while not lending new money without observable repentance?
6. Close with a good season of prayer for one another, and pray for each other’s Thanksgiving holiday and travel... which may offer many occasions for forgiveness work!