

## **TRANSCRIPT of Graeme Preach Week 4 – Outrageous Forgiveness**

ABRAHAM LINCOLN was once asked, by a civil war reporter I believe “how are you going to treat the rebellious southerners when they are finally defeated and have returned to the Union of United States? He replied famously “I will treat them as if they had never been away” which after his death became an idea pursued by his peers.

Many of us will know that the Roman Emperor MARCUS AURELIUS, who reigned over arguably the greatest season of Rome’s military dominance of the known world, was recognised as a Stoic Saint, a philosopher seeking power and peace from within himself. What we mightn’t know is that at times he recognised that his human centricity and authority wasn’t always enough.

It is noted that later in his battlefield experiences he would say to himself every morning “Today, you will meet all kinds of unpleasant people; they will hurt you, and injure you, and insult you; but you cannot live like that; you know better, for you are a man in whom the spirit of God dwells”

You see, forgiveness and wholeness are big for all people in all walks of life and circumstances .. JESUS CHRIST said ... “Father forgive them for they don’t know what they are doing” & He said it at the PEAK moment of His pain, at the high point of His sense of abandonment by those who professed to love him, & amidst the indifference of those who blindly followed the mis-truths and untruths professed about Him.

“Father forgive them for they don’t know any better”, “Father forgive them despite their flaws, “Father forgive them for they have yet to receive a revelation from you about who I am” Jesus essentially revealed the extent of Father God’s love (hold my arms out) by uttering these ridiculous, scandalous, outrageous even super – cala – fragalistic – expiala - docious ... words whilst he died for you and me on the Cross.

Paul made it clear in Romans 3 when he declared, “The wages of sin is death ..... BUT the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Here’s the thing, we, for years have sought to systemize our theology to control people.

We have interpreted this scripture as an intimidation, as a way to manipulate people’s emotions into making promises about their behaviour that they JUST CAN’T KEEP without the grace or the powerful every day presence of Christ IN THEIR LIVES which is clearly

how Paul finished the sentence. Through Jesus Christ – you know IN CHRIST was the phrase that Paul used most often in his letters but even so, we still resist the power and the relational integrity of what it means for us. Even Marcus Aurelius, the emperor or literally the god of Rome, understood that the ONLY chance he had, to make a difference for himself AND others, was to trust the spirit of God IN HIM.

You and I, we can't fix our behaviour, we can't fix others' behaviour .... We CAN sink ourselves deep into a relationship with Jesus Christ so we can LIVE simply .. so others can simply LIVE! My brothers and sisters, eternity doesn't start at the end of our life. We are in it so what is our eternity looking like right now?

Jesus, himself begged us in John chapter 12, that if we are to BE CHRIST in this world, if we are to be HIS BODY in community, if we are to be (in other words) the church that Jesus builds here ON earth as it is in heaven, we need to understand that .. and I quote, (as I did last week) 47 *"If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. 49 For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. 50 I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."*

We need to stop judging, stop pre-judging, stop being disappointed if people don't do what we want them to do, stop trying to modify human behaviour with rules and regulations when Jesus clearly said from the cross, Father forgive them .... And in John 12 suggested that the best way to be a forgiver is to be completely immersed in Christ's victory, won on the cross and simply press in under His wings.

Did you do something yesterday that would amount to being separated from God (even for a moment?)

Have you done something today already that could amount to being separated from God (even for a moment?),

Will you probably do something tomorrow that would amount to being separated from God (even for a moment?)

We've gotta stop trying to work out how to monitor our sin, stop trying to work out forgiveness and start trusting the Holy Spirit within you, within me, to help us be more of Jesus everyday, so we too, like Him, will point

people to the only righteous judge, so that you and I will ask the Father to forgive before, during and after stuff happens.

We have to stop striving in our strength and perceived authority – you see, the strength position, like the Centurion at the base of the Cross who overheard what Jesus said – is to respond to the revelation that Christ is the Messiah, the Son of the living God and that submitting to a relationship with Him, is the only way to deal with life's mistakes, its injustices and ignorances.

We love because He first loved us ... If you think what I'm saying means you have a free swing at sinning or remaining unforgiven this week because you can repent at leisure? I have news for you ... if you think repentance is just seeking forgiveness after the fact by saying sorry or confessing every little sin - you've missed the boat.

Repentance is stopping, turning away from where you are heading, aligning with heaven and taking steps towards Father God. No clearer than what the Prodigal Son did when he came to his senses and identified where home was. It's relational, it's about correcting your journey, continually aligning with the coordinates that God has established.

Repentance is the GIFT God gives us to keep righting the ship and the gift that allows us to play a part in ours and others forgiveness. Hear again, verse 31 of our Luke 15 focus. <sup>31</sup> “My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.”

So ... Love God and do what you like (quoting Augustine and MLK) What I mean is, as you grow in love & clearer understanding of all that the object of your love represents, the more you will act out of that reality and less out of anything else – out of other things that are not only less worthy BUT they are mostly the catalysts that fuel the destructive power of ungratefulness and unforgiveness.

Before Jesus shows us what Father God's love and forgiveness looks like on the CROSS, he tells THREE of the greatest stories ever told (Lk 15) to illustrate what Father God's love and forgiveness looks like & the key is that it looks the same whether or not you become lost like sheep – like sheep we are distracted by all number of things and follow some of them blindly and foolishly OR whether or not you become lost (like a coin) because of someone else's mistake or hurtful act towards you OR

whether or not (like the younger son) you deliberately and wilfully rebel or turn your back on the truth OR whether or not (like the older brother) you allow yourself to lose sight of the big picture, believe that justice is all about YOUR RIGHTS, dis-own your own responsibility and apportion blame to someone else or an external circumstance; something that can't possibly have anything to do with you ...

That's my story. I'm the older brother. I come from an unchurched background but when I was released in the gifts and calling I received, after a while I stopped living out of the grace and anointing and started living like I was 'entitled' to do what I did and I was only able to be healed of my older brother like stubbornness and self-righteousness, and my amazing awareness of others problems alongside my amazing lack of self-awareness about the things that I had interpreted as having nothing to do with me or anything I had done ..

(There are some in this room that are only here because of the journey of healing I went on ... They know, I have always been available to respond to anyone's questions about my sin, my lack of life transforming and direction shifting repentance, and my disobedience – so if YOU have a question sometime, please ask it)

MEANWHILE, when I humbled myself to receive some therapy, to let God show me that I wasn't self-sufficient and I didn't have all the answers; when He showed me I could trust someone who could reflect to me what I was doing to the point of freedom, deliverance and release from the chains of my stupidity and bad decision making – What I discovered, my testimony to you today, is that God's love and forgiveness is the same yesterday, today and forever and we simply need to **submit to it** and all that it provides

(this is the BIG PIC that the Father was trying to get in the older brother's face about that I talked about last week – the Father pleaded with the brother to become large enough in his view that all else was shut out - my view of justice for me was through my narrow lens)

Our responsibility is to urge each other, encourage each other & share the burdens for each other so that we stay in relationship with the Father so we continue to experience ALL THAT HEAVEN HAS TO OFFER, ALL THE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS OF THE HEAVENLY REALMS AS

PAUL SO ELOQUENTLY PUTS IT ..... so we can grow, and separate ourselves from God LESS each day, and become more the agent of God's great love and outrageous forgiveness in all the spheres that we live in, work in and play in, each and every day. Outrageous forgiveness shines a bright light and exposes our pride, things we believe are OUR rights .....

Jesus buried pride and the 'my rights are the most important' arguments at the cross ..... this is how He denied himself. This was the cross He bore. This is how He followed the Father's will (not His own will) What is the cross we need to take up? in order to experience all that this truth about forgiveness has to offer us. ...

What is the pride or right that we need to deny ourselves of? What is in the way of US following Jesus, the Jesus who Paul says "was humble and obedient all the way to death, His death on the cross". Jesus lived HIS LIFE AND DEATH AND RESURRECTION out of heaven's outrageous forgiveness – IF we are the objects of His outrageous forgiveness, **what can we do with that?**

If we extend THIS expression of forgiveness, what rifts might it heal, what hearts might it transform and how might it release people to forgive others who might forgive others, who might forgive and so on. Friends, when you share this truth with people God gives you favour to have relationship with, (in your spheres) many of these people will think all forgiveness is conditional, that God doesn't forgive unless you repent and we shouldn't forgive unless the offending party repents. If this is so, then Jesus' prayer from the cross makes no sense. Like God's love, His forgiveness is unconditional, it's indiscriminate, it's rescuing and designed intentionally to REDEEM HUMAN HEARTS in the ways we've reflected on over the past 4 weeks.

When Jesus is hanging naked and humiliated, dying on the Cross and utters perhaps the greatest prayer ever prayed ..... is it possible that right in that moment He breaks forever the demonic delusion that unforgiveness is empowering, and exposes it as nothing but dis-empowering and destructive.

The questions raised both by Jesus' prayer on the cross and the amazing stories He told that Luke records, these questions are the

important things for us to take away from this month of meetings. There is surely more to come as we keep journeying into this new season of life and mission but for now .....

Can we believe that Jesus expresses the Father's heart when he prays this prayer? We can believe if we compare it to the Father in the story of the lost son.

Can we believe the Father answers this prayer?

Can we believe the God's forgiveness is available to all?

And can we ourselves learn to live out of this forgiveness, together, .... like Jesus both described to us and DID.

Can we? Will we?