

Media and Graphics Notes

Sermon Starter Video?	Yes
Sermon Notes?	Yes
Other Notes	There will be a promo video at the end of the announcements and before the closing hymn to introduce the upcoming sermon series - Growing Forward.

Key Questions

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about how to offer forgiveness to other people.

Why is this sermon important?

This sermon is important because forgiveness allows us to be reconciled to others.

What is the context of this sermon?

This is the second of a two part series between Easter and our capital campaign. It was developed with help of the book *Forgiveness* by Adam Hamilton.

What are the next action steps?

Repent and ask for forgiveness.
Receive the repentance of others and offer forgiveness.
Ask for God's help to move forward.

What is the good news (bottom line)?

The good news is that God has offered forgiveness to us. We are able to offer forgiveness to others through the power of God at work in us.



Metadata

Topic(s)

1. Change Lives
2. Share Christ

4th Sunday of Easter
Forgiveness - Offer Forgiveness
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado
Text Online at <http://j.mp/1RslEFb>

April 17, 2016
Colossians 3:12-15
Preaching Target Word Count: 1,982
Audio Online at <http://j.mp/1SMs81x>

Sermon Books of the Bible

1. Colossians
2. Matthew

Tags

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist, UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, ElDorado, Kansas, GreatPlains, AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, forgiveness, repentance, confession, offer, sin, sins

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Colossians 3:12-15, CEB	5
Response to Scripture	5
Introduction	5
Sermon Starter Video	5
Series Review	5
Sermon Notes and Scripture Study	5
Take Notes	
God Speaking	
Tool for Spiritual Growth	
Prayer	6
Making Relationships Work	6
Weddings and Marriages	6
David and Julia	
Nicole and Andrew	
Key Scripture: Colossians 3:12-15	6
Virtues in Relationship	
Struggle with Virtue, Tolerance and Forgiveness	
Small Stones	7
Navigating with Nicole	7
Finding a Coffee Shop	
Nicole irritates me	
I irritate Nicole	
Metaphor of Stones	
How to Deal with Small Stones	8
Transition	
Medium-Sized Stones	8
Stones Build Walls	8
How to Deal with Medium-Sized Stones	9
Seek Justice	
Offer Forgiveness	

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Repentance	9
Enormous Stones	10
Conclusion	10
Six Words and Stones	10
Good News	10
Call to Action	10
Invitation	10
Closing Prayer	11

Colossians 3:12-15, CEB

Therefore, as God's choice, holy and loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other. And over all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. The peace of Christ must control your hearts—a peace into which you were called in one body. And be thankful people.

Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

Introduction

Sermon Starter Video

[Play sermon starter video.](#)

Series Review

Jesus was clear in his teaching: He offers us God's forgiveness and instructs us to forgive one another. Why is this so hard? What is it that makes us so unforgiving of ourselves and of each other? The Easter season begins with our youth leading worship on April 3. Then, we will consider one of the greatest issues we confront as human beings. We'll take an honest, realistic look at how to offer and receive forgiveness.

Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

Take Notes

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today.

God Speaking

I pray that you will hear God speaking to you sometime during the service today. Listen for God's word for you – something that helps you live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Whenever you hear it, write it down.

Tool for Spiritual Growth

Then, take this bulletin home with you so that you can grow in your faith outside of worship by reflecting on what you heard today, praying for others connected with our community and reading scripture.

Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Making Relationships Work

Weddings and Marriages

David and Julia

Yesterday, Nicole and I were in Kansas City for the marriage of one of my friends from college. It was a beautiful ceremony and so great to see a couple so in love. I thought back to our wedding day and thought to myself, "Things change over time."

Nicole and Andrew

This summer Nicole and I will have been married ten years. We have had all kinds of times together - some amazingly incredible, some pretty difficult and most of them somewhere in between. It is hard work to be in a long term intimate relationship. Actually, any relationship that we have over a long period of time takes work and these long term relationships are not possible without forgiveness.

Key Scripture: Colossians 3:12-15

The scripture passage from Colossians for today was read at the wedding ceremony yesterday and it is a passage that I read at almost every wedding I officiate.

Therefore, as God's choice, holy and loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.¹

You might imagine putting on these qualities in a way that is similar to putting on your clothes in the morning.

Virtues in Relationship

Compassion is the act of feeling what the other person is feeling. You are trying, as best as you are able to step into their shoes for a moment.

Kindness is the thoughtful actions that you do to bless and encourage your partner without the expectation that they will do something in return.

Humility is recognizing that you are not the most important person in the relationship and you seek to put the needs of the other before your own.

Gentleness is the tone that you use when speaking and interacting – the opposite of being harsh as you interact.

Patience is a willing to bear with the other person in the ups and downs of life. This is the "for better, for worse" in a relationship.

¹ Colossians 3:12, CEB.

Now, imagine for a moment if every person lived up to this prescription for our lives with other people. Our relationships with other people would be incredibly positive and forgiveness would be less of a necessity for our every day lives.

Struggle with Virtue, Tolerance and Forgiveness

However, I will confess that there are times when I struggle to live these out in my relationship with Nicole and other people. My guess is that many of you may also struggle with some of these virtues from time to time. Paul knows this about human nature, which is why he continues in Colossians 3:13:

Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other.²

Paul knows enough about human nature to add this verse. We aren't always going to be able to live in the way that he outlines in the verse before. We are going to get on each other's nerves, so he suggests that we be tolerant with each other. Even in the best relationships there are regular sources of conflict, many of which can seem a little ridiculous at times.

Small Stones

Navigating with Nicole

Finding a Coffee Shop

We had a bit of time yesterday between the wedding ceremony and the reception. Our plan was to go find a coffee shop and relax for a bit before heading on to the reception site. We drive by the reception site to make sure that we know where it is and then our next task is to find a coffee shop.

I pull up Yelp on my phone and am looking for the highest rated coffee shop, that is close by and open today. Nicole suggests that we head up to the next major intersection and we will find something there – “You know, where you might find a coffee shop.”

Nicole irritates me

I think this is ridiculous. If you are going somewhere, you need to know where you are going – have a destination. So, we get in a little argument about where we are going, right there on the highway. Meanwhile, we almost miss our exit, but do end up pulling off at the next major intersection. We do find somewhere to go without having an address in the GPS. It is frustrating to me that she is okay just driving along without a clear destination.

² Colossians 3:13, CEB.

I irritate Nicole

Of course, it is the same thing for Nicole. It is frustrating for her that I need to have an exact destination. Every time we need to get somewhere I pull out my phone and search for the directions. She says, “I just look at other cars to see if they look like they are going where I am going. Then, I just follow them.” She can’t believe that I need an exact address for where I am going.

Metaphor of Stones

This is a pretty ridiculous thing to fight about, but it helps give you the idea of how little things can be irritating. You might be able to imagine some small conflicts that you have with your spouse, friend or co-worker on a daily basis.

Using the metaphor of stones that I shared with you last week, these are the pebbles. They are small and don’t weigh very much, yet if we hold on to them, they add up over time.

How to Deal with Small Stones

So, how do we offer forgiveness for these small things?

It’s easy to say, but hard to do – let the little things go.

A colleague of mine suggests the following acronyms.

RAP.

R. A. P.

R - Remember the ways that you mess up. Pause for a moment to consider how often you have done something similar to this. It’s hard to continue to be frustrated, if you know you do the same thing.

A - Assume the best. We all have off days and off moments. I know that I do. When we assume the best about someone, it can help us offer forgiveness.

P - Pray for them. Jesus, himself, invited us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Ask for God to bless them and that God might use you to be a blessing for them.

Transition

Of course, not all stones are small.

As we get past the small things which we can learn to live with or let go, we come to the medium-sized stones, that can get larger over time.

Medium-Sized Stones³

Stones Build Walls

Medium-sized stones are those things that can’t easily be let go. They include neglect, hurtful words, public embarrassment, dishonesty, and a failure to love and

³ Excerpt From: Adam Hamilton. “Forgiveness.” iBooks. <https://itun.es/us/sNrIK.I>

cherish. These stones don't just create a gap between ourselves and others - they build a wall.

When we carry stones of this size, they begin to make it hard to breath, hard to talk to the other person and even hard to love. The stones become the barrier between yourself and the other person.

How to Deal with Medium-Sized Stones

There are two ways to respond to these stones – seek justice or offer forgiveness.

Seek Justice

If you never feel mercy from the other person and if you never ask for it, it's likely that you are going to seek justice. Often this means getting even. It's like a painful dance where you go back and forth with each other. There are some people we know so well that we know exactly where to jab that will hurt them the most.

"You hurt me, so I'm going to hurt you back."

"Maybe I shouldn't, you deserve it after the way that you hurt me."

When we do this, we put stones in each other's backpack.

When we do this, our relationships grow more and more distant.
The wall between us gets higher and higher.

Offer Forgiveness

Instead, our faith teaches us to offer forgiveness.

Repentance

Forgiveness is when we release our anger, bitterness and desire for revenge.
We offer mercy to the person that has wronged us.

This is most easily done when someone repents. They recognize they have done wrong, feel regret, confess and demonstrate a changed heart and life. These steps are necessary to ask for forgiveness from another person.

After someone has repented, we have the choice about whether to forgive.

We can choose to hold on to the stone...
or to forgive and let it go.

Now, this isn't always easy.
It can be an act of sheer willpower and only possible God's power at work in us.

Enormous Stones⁴

I also want to briefly mention the most serious sins that can tear souls apart – physical, psychological, or verbal abuse, addictions; and infidelity. These are incredibly heavy bounds that you can't carry around for long.

For reconciliation to be possible, it may require time with counselors, support groups or other intentional work to heal the soul. It is possible for healing to occur, but it won't always occur. There are times when you need to find help and if you find yourself in a situation like that, come talk to me, call the police, tell someone and get help.

Conclusion

Six Words and Stones

As I mentioned last week, the six most important words in relationships are these:

I am sorry.

I forgive you.

We have to be able to say and mean both of them to make relationships work.

Sometimes, we are able to bear with each other and let the little things go.

Other times, repentance is necessary. We need to change our hearts and lives.

When the wrongs are most serious, we may need help from others.

Good News

The good news is that God has offered forgiveness to us. We are able to offer forgiveness to others through the power of God at work in us.

Call to Action

Repent and ask for forgiveness.

Receive the repentance of others and offer forgiveness.

Ask for God's help to move forward.

Invitation

When we are able to offer and receive forgiveness, we find that we can take many of the burdens that we carry...

lay them down...

and receive Jesus invitation:

⁴ Excerpt From: Adam Hamilton. "Forgiveness." iBooks. <https://itun.es/us/sNrIK.I>

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“Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Put on my yoke, and learn from me. I’m gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves. My yoke is easy to bear, and my burden is light.”⁵

Closing Prayer

O, God, help us to offer forgiveness to others.
We confess that we sin and are in need of your forgiveness.
Heal us, we pray, and restore to us the joy of your salvation.
In your holy name, Amen.

⁵ Matthew 11:28-30, CEB.