

This I Believe

As the flood of thoughts flowed through my mind this week, two deep believes kept surfacing for me.

The first is that I believe “the love of money is the root of all evil”, or at least “much evil”. This seems so relevant to the current financial crisis.

The second belief that seemed to keep surfacing had a much stronger position in my heart and I believe a higher priority for mankind. I believe in forgiveness.

I would expect most of us first learned forgiveness from our parents, and maybe our mothers most of all. As young people we are often testing the boundaries of what is right and wrong and at least in my case, my parents forgave my forays into wrong more times than I can remember. Sometimes I think what it might be like if, as a young person, you were never forgiven.

As I have grown to an adult, the act of forgiveness seems to me to be a core solution for humanity. Forgiveness, when fully received, transforms people from feelings of guilt and separation to ones of acceptance and comfort. When I joined the Presbyterian Church, I began to see the power of Christ’s teachings and ultimate sacrifice of forgiveness. His teachings of inclusiveness of those that society deemed outcasts would have been viewed as forgiveness by those early followers. For Christ to give up his life seems to me to be the ultimate act of forgiveness for mankind.

Sometimes I try to imagine what it would be like if we all forgave those that wronged us. If we forgave the small things said in haste. If we forgave those that turned down the wrong path of life and were now ready to change.

I believe that forgiveness has two roles. The first is the forgiver who has been wronged, or has seen wrong, but is willing to forgive for the greater good. The second is the forgivee, who if they can receive this forgiveness can move past the transgression and make a new start. I believe that to truly receive forgiveness has its limits as well and that society must protect itself from those that cannot find a way to accept forgiveness, and change.

I often struggle with this simple concept of forgiving. It seems much easier, and sometimes more satisfying short term, to act in revenge. But as difficult as it is, I have found that forgiveness allows space for peace and for the thoughts of a transgression to pass.

Corrie Ten Boom, a Christian woman who survived a Nazi concentration camp during the Holocaust, said, "Forgiveness is to set a prisoner free, and to realize the prisoner was you."

We will know the work of forgiveness is complete when we experience the freedom that comes as a result. We are the ones who suffer most when we choose not to forgive. When we do forgive, the Lord sets our hearts free from the anger, bitterness, resentment, and hurt that previously imprisoned us.

I truly believe that God, through Christ, meant to show us how to forgive so we might have heaven on earth.

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