“The Meaning of Forgiveness”

I

Int  This mornig I want to talk to you about the meaning of sin. This sermon is only addressed to those persons who are conscious of moral wrongdoing. If you have no unease stirrings of conscience about your attitude toward anything or your relationship toward with anybody, then this sermon does not apply to you.

But before you conclude that this sermon does not apply to you, you had better be certain what we mean by “sin” Usually when we think of sin we think of [a list?] of gross iniquities—murder, robbery, adultery, drunkenness. But we must add to this category at least three other categories:

1. There are sins of temperament—vindictiveness, stubbornness, jealousy, bad temper, malicious gossip—How much more prevalent they are, how much more harm they do.

2. There are sins of social attitude.

3. There are the sins of neglect. It is not alone the things that we do, but the things we have left undone that haunt us—the letters we did not write, the words we did not speak, the opportunity we did not take. How often Jesus stressed this sin. What was wrong with that one talent man who buried his talent? What did he do? That was the trouble—he did nothing, he missed his chance.

So here they are—sins of passion, sins of temperament, sins of social attitude, sins of neglect. I suspect that every one here fits into one of these categories. So stay with us, you too need forgiveness.

II

The need for forgiveness. No man’s sin is ever done with until it has come through this process of forgiveness.

1. Aeschylus’ Orestes³

2. The Scarlet—Arthur Dimmesdale⁴

3. Psychiatry—Most of the cases of mental derangement of a functional type are due to a sense of guilt.

III

What, then, is forgiveness?

A. First of all it is a pardon. It is a fresh start, another chance, a new beginning.

B. Second, forgiveness is a process of life and the Christian weapon of social

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¹ Cf. Luke 15:20
² Cf. Matthew 25:14-30
³ Aeschylus (525–456 BCE) was an Athenian dramatist whose works included the trilogy Orestes. The protagonist, Orestes, murdered his mother and her lover, but was eventually forgiven by the Areopagus thanks to the intervention of Athena, the goddess of wisdom.
⁴ At the end of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Scarlet Letter (1850), Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale revealed that he was the father of Hester Prynne’s illegitimate child and asked God to forgive them both.
Redemption Forgiveness is always spoken of for others. Give Peter’s attempt to put it in legal and statistical terms.

Here is the Christian weapon against social evil. We are to go out with the spirit of forgiveness, heal the hurts, right the wrongs and change society with forgiveness. Of course we don’t think this is practical. This is the solution of the race problem.

(C)

AD CSKC Sermon file, folder 16, “Meaning of Forgiveness” / “Questions Easter Answers”

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5 King may refer to Matthew 18:21-22 “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but, Until seventy times seven.”

“I Sat Where They Sat”

Ez 3:15

[1948-1954]

Introd—Ezekiel as a prophet of the exile. He had the privilege of sitting where those of the exile sat.

I Consider the fact that unless you sit where others sit you really can inspire them

(a) Give the example of the numerous problems of people. Unless you can put yourself in the place of that person you can really help them. You are not to be then with the “holier than thou” attitude.

(b) Give the example of modern counseling methods. The counselor must create a “permissive atmosphere.”

II Consider again that unless you sit where others sit you cannot really understand them

(a) Race relations. If the white man was closer to the Negro he would know more about the Negro and understand him better.

(b) Intercultural relations. The missionary movement would be better off if the missionary sat where the natives sat.

AD CSKC Sermon file, folder 50, Sermons Not Preached

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1 Ezekiel 3:15 “Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.”

2 Rogers, “Significant Aspects of Client-Centered Therapy,” p 416