KINGDOM MERCY: THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS
20250525

INTRODUCTION

The Series of sermons we are in at the moment is Kingdom Living. We have been examining key concepts about life in the Kingdom of God.

As a Vineyard Movement we value THE KINGDOM OF GOD. We aim to move in the signs of the present fulfilment of the kingdom, inviting (invoking) the Spirit's powerful presence, ministering through the Spirit's gifts, and seeing God heal and work wonders.
What we have covered so far in this series:

Kingdom Come
Kingdom Evangelism
Kingdom Living
Kingdom Fellowship

Today we are looking at the subject of **Kingdom Mercy**.

One of our values as a Vineyard Movement is that '**We value the MERCY OF GOD'.** We believe that **mercy** is fundamental to all that God does in salvation. We, therefore, aim to extend mercy to one another and to all to whom we minister.

John Wimber, founder of Vineyard, often referred to **Kingdom Mercy** as **Kingdom Forgiveness**.

Our Christian walk begins with God's forgiveness and continues day by day in God's forgiveness. We never come to the end of our need for it -- and we never come to the end of God's supply of it.

But God's forgiveness isn't meant to stop with us. He wants it not only to come to but also to flow through us. Just as he shows mercy and grants forgiveness to us, we are to become a people who show mercy and grant forgiveness to others.

We are to be not only **a forgiven people**, but also **a forgiving people**. Our relationships with those around us are to be marked by the same mercy God has shown in his relationship with us.

God extends His mercy towards us, and we extend that mercy to others.

EVERYBODY NEEDS FORGIVENESS

It is impossible to live on this planet without being hurt by someone or something sometime. Every individual encounters at some time or another, the temptation to hate.
A few examples:

- You may have grown up in a broken home and been hurt by the rejection and unfair treatment from an abusive parent or parents.
- You may be a person who has experienced robbery and/or assault at the hands of an abusive wicked individual.
- You may have lost everything through betrayal in a business transaction or been fired unjustly.
- You may be someone who has experienced rejection, exploitation, discrimination and injustice for generations.
- You may be in a marriage relationship where things are just deteriorating with time, and divorce seems the only way out.

Whatever pain you have faced or are facing in life is going to either hinder your growth or strengthen your character depending on what you choose to do. The most important ingredient in all negative situations is 'forgiveness'. We have to learn to forgive, as it has the power to change our lives, present and future.

There is incredible power in forgiveness. Power that can release us from years of serious internal suffering, caused by our holding on to unforgiveness.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FORGIVE OTHERS?

In the New Testament, the Greek verb ***aphiemi*** primarily means "***to send away***"— in other words, "to *forgive,* send away or release **the penalty** when someone wrongs you."

This implies that you need...

- *To release* your right to hear "I'm sorry"
- *To release* your right to be bitter
- *To release* your right to get even

To forgive is to *release your rights* regarding the offense.

- *To release* your right to dwell (meditate) on the offense
- *To release* your right to hold on to the offense
- *To release* your right to keep bringing up the offense

To forgive is to ***reflect the character of Christ***. Just as God is willing to forgive us, we are called to forgive others.

- *To forgive* is to extend mercy.
- *To forgive* is to give a gift of grace.
- *To forgive* is to set the offender free.

To forgive means to *release the resentment* (bitterness, anger) that you have toward your offender.

Proverbs 17:9

> *"He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends."*

NOTE: Setting the offender free does not mean they are absolved of their behaviour. They will still have to account to God for their sin.

ILLUSTRATION: A REAL LIFE STORY

The year was 1944. Nazi Germany occupies Holland. An elderly watchmaker and his family were actively involved in the Dutch Underground. By hiding Jewish people in a secret room of their home, members of the Ten Boom family courageously help Jewish men, women, and children escape Hitler's roll call of death.

Yet one fateful day, their secret was discovered. The watchmaker was arrested, and soon after being imprisoned, he died.

His daughter Betsie also could not escape the jaws of death at the hands of her cruel captors. she died in the Nazi concentration camp. We don't have time to consider what people went through in those concentration camps.

Corrie, the watchmaker's youngest daughter did survive. The question was, "would she ever be able to forgive her captors, those who caused the death of her father and her sister?"

Two years after the war, Corrie was speaking at a church in Munich, Germany. She had come from Holland to a defeated Germany, bringing with her the message that God does indeed forgive. There in the crowd, a solemn face stared back at her. As the people filed out, a balding, heavyset man moved toward her — a man in a grey overcoat clutching a brown felt hat.

Suddenly a scene flashed back in her mind: *the blue uniform; the cap with its skull and crossbones; the huge room with its harsh, overhead lights; the humiliation of walking naked past this man...* this man who was now standing before her.

He said, "You mentioned Ravensbruck in your talk. I was a guard there," "But since that time I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well." He extended his hand toward her and asked, "Will you forgive me?" Corrie stared at the outstretched hand. The moment seemed like hours as she wrestled with the most difficult decision she had ever had to make. Corrie knew Scripture well, but applying this passage seemed to be too much...

Luke 17:3-4

> *"If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."*

The horrors of World War II were now far behind Corrie, but the horrors of the war between forgiveness and unforgiveness still raged. How could she find the strength to take the hand of someone who represented the evil regime that

destroyed the two people she held most dear? How could she forgive this man? To Corrie's dismay, she discovered she could not!

Corrie shared this:
His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often... the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side. Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him. I tried to smile. I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness. As I took his hand, the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me. And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself.

Wow! That is some real tough life story.

NOTE: Jesus would never tell us to *"love your enemies, do good to those who hate you"* (Luke 6:27) without giving us the power to do it. And Corrie ten Boom was living proof of this love until her death in 1983. Forgiveness is possible in Christ.

THE GREAT EXAMPLE

Our greatest example and mentor when it comes to **forgiving** is Jesus, our Lord.

Luke 23:34 (NLT)

> *34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." And the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice.*

As his tormentors continued to humiliate him and inflict pain upon him, he saw their greatest needs, and ministered to them. He asked the Father to forgive them for what they had done, and were still doing, to him in ignorance.

We sometimes hear people say, "*Forgiveness is based on repentance, and that person has never repented, so they can't be forgiven.*" But that's not true. Just think about what they did to Jesus, and they had no intention of repenting, yet Jesus said, "*Father, forgive them. .* ."

We tend to think that Jesus was only referring to the people responsible for crucifying him; but I believe he was referring to all of humanity with that exclamation.

When Jesus prayed, from the cross, that we would be forgiven, God answered that prayer. Forgiveness was given to us, as a free gift

from our compassionate God, but anything that's given to us is not ours until we receive it.

FORGIVENESS UNLIMITED

I have heard people say: "If he doesn't apologize to me, I won't forgive him." and "I have given him one chance, and that's all he's going to get." What is wrong with these statements?

Well let's see what Jesus said.

Matthew 18:21-22 (NLT2)

> *21 Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" 22 "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven! (PS:490 times)*

Peter was very generous in his concept of forgiveness. To forgive a person seven times for having wronged oneself is very generous, far more generous than what most people do.

"Seventy times seven" simply infers as often as it is necessary. Most of us would need to be forgiven more than seven times in a day! We should forgive as often as we would like to be forgiven. No limit is set to how many times we need to forgive ourselves and others.

IS FORGIVENESS THE SAME AS RECONCILIATION?

Let's remove some confusion from our understanding. **Forgiveness** is not the same as **reconciliation**.

Forgiveness focuses on the offense, whereas reconciliation focuses on the relationship. Forgiveness requires no relationship.

Take note:

- ***Forgiveness*** can take place with only one person — ***Reconciliation*** requires at least two persons.
- ***Forgiveness*** is directed one-way — ***Reconciliation*** is reciprocal ... occurring two-ways.
- ***Forgiveness*** is a decision to release the offender — ***Reconciliation*** is the effort to re-join the offender.
- ***Forgiveness*** involves a change in thinking about the offender — ***Reconciliation*** involves a change in behaviour by the offender.
- ***Forgiveness*** is a free gift to the one who has broken trust — ***Reconciliation*** is a restored relationship based on restored trust.
- ***Forgiveness*** is extended even if it is never, ever earned — ***Reconciliation*** is offered to the offender because it has been earned.
- ***Forgiveness*** is unconditional, regardless of a lack of repentance — ***Reconciliation*** is conditional based on repentance.

Note: It is very important that we do not confuse forgiveness with reconciliation. Also, reconciliation may never happen – but forgiveness must be given.

CONDITIONS TO GIVING FORGIVENESS

Question: "How can I forgive someone who has not apologized or shown any kind of repentance?"
Answer: Forgiveness has nothing to do with repentance. Forgiveness is not based on what the offender does or deserves, but rather on giving the gift of grace to your offender — a gift that is not deserved.

The real question is: "Do you want to be Christlike?" When Jesus was being crucified on the cross, His enemies had neither apologized nor repented, yet He extended His heart of forgiveness by praying, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*." (Luke 23:34).

Question: What if I don't <u>feel</u> like forgiving?
Answer: Forgiveness is not based on a ***feeling***, but rather on the ***fact*** that we — all of us — are called by God to forgive. Forgiveness is not an ***emotion***, but is rather an act of the ***will*** (the power of choice). Therefore, what "seems right" based on feelings can easily be wrong!

Would we have a chance if God treated us just as we treat others? What if He forgave us only as often as we forgive others? Could we be standing condemned before God by our unforgiving spirit?

If we forgive in the same manner that we would like to be forgiven, it could change everything.

Matthew 6:9-15 (NLT)

> *9 Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. 10 May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today the food we need, 12 and* ***forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us****. 13 And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. 14* ***"If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. 15 But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.***

That is a very hard saying. Why is Jesus so stern on this point? I think the reason is this: the decision of who to forgive, what to forgive, and when to forgive is one that belongs to God alone. When we take it upon ourselves to decide whether we will extend forgiveness in a particular situation, we are seizing a function that belongs only to God. We are, in effect, making ourselves God!

The bottom line is, "**Forgiven people forgive people**". We have to forgive because of what Jesus went through for us on the cross.

Jesus actually says that our own experience of God's forgiveness depends on our willingness to extend that forgiveness to others. We receive only as we give.

Forgiveness sets both the offender and the offended free. As long as we hold someone else accountable for some offense or debt, we are also bound in the same bondage. When we free them, we are also freed.

WHY SHOULD WE GET RID OF UNFORGIVENESS?

It has been said that Unforgiveness is like:

- drinking a cup of poison and expecting the other person to die.
- letting someone live in your head rent free!

Unforgiveness can turn into an emotional stronghold that can damage many areas of our life. We do have control of what we dwell (meditate) on. That is why the Bible says we are to... *"Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5)*

When we refuse to forgive, our unforgiveness keeps us *emotionally stuck to both <u>the offense</u> and <u>the offender</u>.* A *continual* refusal to forgive digs a deeper hole in which we can easily hide our hardened heart.

What does unforgiveness do to us? Most obviously, perhaps, it ruins relationship. How can we live in love and harmony with people against whom we hold a grudge? But it also causes other kinds of problems. It can produce a kind of spiritual paralysis that can prevent us from growing to Christian maturity. It can even lead to physical or psychological illness.

Blaming others is a favourite tactic to justify unforgiveness. We can become too comfortable in the unnatural habitat (?place) of self-righteousness and self-pity.

Our past hurts, though buried, are still very much alive. And because they are not released in God's way, oddly enough, we *become like our offender* (but we are blind to it).

I have witnessed children say things like, "I will never be like my dad or my mom when I get older", and I have watched them become just like their parent. Be careful of the "I will never be like so and so. . .", because you may be harbouring unforgiveness towards them that could result in you being like the person you don't want to be like.

Not forgiving our offender is an offense to God, thereby making us an offender to God as well! The Bible says to confess and renounce this sin.

If you have been hurt and as a result harbour anger in your heart, realize that your unresolved anger can be a foothold for the enemy.

Ephesians 4:26-27. The Bible says,

"'In your anger do not sin': Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."

Ephesians 4:26-27 (MSG)

[26] Go ahead and be angry. You do well to be angry — but don't use your anger as fuel for revenge. And don't stay angry. Don't go to bed angry. [27] Don't give the Devil that kind of foothold in your life.

NOTE: Giving a foothold to the devil opens up our life to demonic affliction. Satan's demons are very happy to torment us.

We as God's family are called to live Kingdom Mercy - living in the power of forgiveness.

PRAYER MINISTRY TIME:

Is the Holy Spirit reminding you about a person/s you need to forgive.

Have you remembered offences this morning that remind you of hurt, and has brought back anger, etc.?

You may feel you have opened a foothold for Satan in your life. Today you can go away free and healed.

God is ready to give you the ability to forgive, just like He did for Corrie Ten Boom.

If you are a person who does not readily practice forgiveness ask God to help you get that sorted out today.

The most subtle and damaging type of unforgiveness is the kind that is oriented toward oneself. You hate yourself because of past sin, and you find it impossible to forgive yourself. This has led to an internal bitterness and self-loathing that ends up bringing more of the same sin that got the whole process started in the first place!

[The 'Prayer Team' is ready to minister to those desiring prayer this morning. If you don't feel you want to come forward ask someone in the congregation you know to pray for you].