

Dangerous Prayers Msg 4 – Forgive Me
 Sermon preached by Dr. Rick Mandl
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We're in a series called Dangerous Prayers.

When we think of prayers we don't usually think of them as being dangerous to pray

What we're being reminded of in this series is that when we pray, God not only hears our prayers, but He also takes them seriously, as should we.

The prayer we're looking at this morning is maybe not one that we would immediately think of as being "Dangerous" because it's a prayer that is so familiar.

It is arguably the most famous prayer in all the Bible.

Matthew chapter 6 contains what we know as "The Lord's Prayer"

Most of you are familiar with it

Many of you committed it to memory growing up.

And if it weren't for the fact that we've probably memorized it in a variety of Bible translations, I'd have us try to recite it out loud together.

Instead, I've printed the words in your notes, and you'll also see them up on the screen.

I'm going to read them out loud and as you listen and reflect on those words, you might wonder how it is that THE MOST FAMOUS prayer in all the word of God, might also be the MOST DANGEROUS prayer that you and I could pray

That's what I want us to think about this morning.

This prayer that Jesus taught to his disciples was shared with them in response to their request that he would teach them to pray, just as John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray.

In response to that request, Jesus shared these words . . .

Matthew 6, beginning to read at verse 9

"This, then, is how you should pray:

***'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
 Your kingdom come, your will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.'" Matthew 6:9-10***

"Give us today our daily bread.

***And forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.***

***And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from the evil one.'" Matthew 6:11-13***

"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."
Matthew 6:14-15

In case you missed it, the really dangerous part of that prayer is tied to one word within the prayer.

One little word found in verse 12, and the word I'm referring to is the word "as"

Forgive us our debts, AS we also have forgiven our debtors.

I don't know about you, but when I look at that I wish that the last half of verse 12 wasn't there.

I don't have a problem with the first half of verse 12

"Forgive us our debts"

"Forgive us our trespasses"

"Forgive us our sins"

I mean, hey. . .

"I'm a sinner!"

Can I get an AMEN from anybody?

Okay, good to know.

You all agree that I'm a sinner.

And you're a sinner.

We're all sinners.

We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

If we're honest, we'll admit that we don't live up to our own standards, much less God's

We MAKE resolutions.

We BREAK resolutions.

We set goals.

We sometimes fail to meet those goals.

If we can't meet our own standards, and we know that our standards are lower than God's, then we shouldn't have a hard time admitting that we've sinned and we need forgiveness for our sins, or debts or transgressions, or whatever your version says.

Again, that's not the problem that most of us have with the prayer

Most of us can ADMIT that we're sinners.

The problem we have, is not in asking God to forgive us

The problem we have is with the DANGEROUS part of this prayer.

The problem we have is asking God to forgive me the way that I've forgiven others.

The problem we have is with the "AS"

Go Ahead And Circle That Word

This is the word that it all hangs upon.

Forgive us our debts,

As we also have forgiven our debtors

In that one little phrase, we're asking God to forgive us, exactly in the way that we're forgiving others.

When it comes to the forgiveness that God forgives us with, we're asking Him to use the exact same standard that we use to forgive other people.

That's what the text says

But that's definitely not what I WISH it would say.

Jesus said, *"When you pray. . . pray like this . . ."*

Say "Father forgive me my debt, exactly like, in accordance with, and in the exact same way that I choose to forgive those who have sinned against me."

When I say that this is a DANGEROUS PRAYER, the challenge is not in UNDERSTANDING what it's saying.

The challenge is in APPLYING what it's saying.

There's nothing hidden in these words.

The message of the text is simply this.

"If you don't forgive other's their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

Some of you hear that, and you think, "What did you say?"

Let me repeat it.

What I said was. . .

"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

Matthew 6:14-15

Think about that.

Jesus said, "Unless I forgive, I will not be forgiven"

Saint Augustine called this text "a terrible petition."

He said that "If you pray these words while harboring an unforgiving spirit, you are actually asking God not to forgive you."

Ponder that for a moment.

If you pray "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" while refusing to forgive those who have wronged you, this prayer which is meant to be a blessing becomes a self-inflicted curse.

In that case you are really saying, "O God, since I have not forgiven my brother, please do not forgive me."

That is why Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great English preacher, said that "If you pray the Lord's Prayer with an unforgiving spirit, you have virtually signed your own "death-warrant."

Let me share with you

Three reasons why we need to forgive others. . .

Why Do I Need To Forgive?

1. Because God has Forgiven Me

Colossians 3:13 says it this way . . .

“Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.” Col. 3:13

Don’t miss that word . . . **“must”**

As Christians, something that we need to remember is that “God will never ask you to forgive another person more than He has already forgiven you.”

Think about that for a minute. . . let it soak in

One of the reasons many people have such a hard time FORGIVING is because they don’t feel FORGIVEN

When God asks you to forgive, He’s only asking you to do for others what he’s already done for you.

So the starting point for forgiving others, is understanding how God has forgiven me.

A second reason that I need to forgive is because . . .

2. Because I’ll need Future Forgiveness

Another verse, this time from Mark’s gospel that echoes the same theme we’ve been looking at this morning is Mark 11:25

Again, the words of Jesus.

Here he says . . .

“But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against,

Why?

Why is it important to do that first?

He tells us.

It’s . . .

so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too.” Mark 11:25

What is Jesus saying?

That if you ever ever ever hold a grudge God won’t ever forgive you any of your sins?

No, what he’s saying here is - - -

Treat others the way that you want God to treat you.

I need to forgive today, if no other reason than I know I’ll be needing forgiveness in the future.

And then third I need to forgive . . .

3. Because Resentment doesn’t Work

Plain and simple, it doesn’t

Inevitably it winds up hurting you more than it hurts the other person.

“Surely resentment destroys the fool...” Job 5:2

I don’t know how many of you saw the news story this week about a standoff that occurred in Korea town over a parking space.

In case you missed it, here it is.

Drivers Have Epic Parking Spot Standoff

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3nPoXfpt_c

I know what some of you are thinking. . . .

You’re thinking, *interesting clip, but it doesn’t really illustrate your point, if your point is that “Resentment Doesn’t Work”*

Because it worked for these two drivers!

But let me ask you, “Did it? Really?”

The stand-off began at 6:20PM and didn’t end until almost 8:00PM

I mean they gave up more than an hour and a half of their lives for a parking space.

And then when the third car pulls away and they were both able to park, neither driver will get out of their car, at least for quite a while.

I’m not sure if they were afraid of coming face to face with the other driver or what.

Bottom line is RESENTMENT doesn’t WORK

It makes me miserable.

How Can I Become A Forgiving Person?

I'll suggest three things you can do.

But before we do let me say something in terms of your own application of these steps.

Some of you here this morning have experienced hurts in your past that are horrific. . .
nightmarish . . .

For some of you these are **things that happened years ago** - - - maybe when you were a child

And for you, forgiveness will be a process. . . it may be a long process - - - but it's a process that starts with a decision that you want to be more like Christ - - -

It may begin with you saying to God, **"Lord, I don't have it in me to forgive, and so I'm asking you to give me the strength to forgive. . . ."**

Or maybe **"God, I don't want to do it! So you deal with my attitude."**

Give me the "Want To"

Forgiveness for you may be a life-long process, but it's a process that God wants you to go through to become more like Jesus.

On the other hand, there are **probably a lot more of us here who are holding a grudge over something minor** - something stupid - a situation where we are making a mountain out of a molehill.

Someone said something to you that is slightly insulting - and you just can't get over it.

You need to get over it today - - - before you walk out those doors.

A lot of you are somewhere on the scale in between the two people

Some of you have deep grievances -

For some of you it's a mountain you've made out of a molehill, and a lot of you are somewhere in between.

But wherever you are on that scale, these **three Biblical principles** apply to you and God can help you to become a person of forgiveness by the power of his H.S. so jot these things down. . .

Number one - - -

1. Refuse to Retaliate

Don't try to try to get even or get ahead.

Proverbs 20:22 says. . . .

"Don't say, 'I will get even for this wrong.' Wait for the Lord to handle the matter." Proverbs 20:22

That lays out the options pretty well -

You can either try to get even -- yourself -- or you can let God even the score.

Now let me ask you

Who do you think does a better job of it?

Who do you think has more resources at their disposal to get even?

You or God?

Leave it in God's hands -"Let Him settle the score."

Don't take it upon yourself to repay a wrong.

One day God is going to have the last word.

Let God be God.

First principle - - - Refuse to Retaliate

Second principle

2. Make the First Move

When it comes to forgiveness, someone has got to take the initiative - - someone has to make the first move - - and that someone should be you.

In Matthew chapter 5, in the midst of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says something about this.

He says . . .

"If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you,

Pause there for a moment.

Notice, he doesn't say that you remember **a grudge that you have against someone else.**

He says you ***remember a grudge a friend has against you,***

What does he say to do?

He says to . . .

abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God." Matthew 5:23-24

Now think about the implications of that for just a second.

What Jesus is saying is that

Right relationships take a priority even over worship.

You can't worship God if you don't have right relationships with others.

We have all kinds of . . .

REASONS FOR NOT FORGIVING

Think of some of the excuses we come up with to avoid making it right.

"I'm waiting until I feel like it."

"They haven't asked me to forgive them." (I will when they ask, they haven't asked! I'm not forgiving until they ask)

"I want them to learn a lesson."

"If I forgive them, they'll just do it again!" They may.

"They did it on purpose."

"They aren't really sorry."

"I'd be a hypocrite if I forgave them because I don't feel like forgiving them."

MEMORY VERSE

"Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you." Ephesians 4:32

How did God through Christ forgive us?

In two weeks we'll celebrate Easter.

When it comes to Jesus hanging on the cross, do you remember what he cried out as he was hanging there?

"Father, forgive them. . . .

WHY??? *For they have apologized to me????????*

NO!!!!

Father, Forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

Let me ask you something.

When Jesus said, "Forgive them!"

How many people had asked him for forgiveness?

How many???

One, two, how many???

Zero!!!!

In fact, Jesus said, "Father forgive them, cuz they don't even get that they're doing anything wrong!!!!

Forgive them anyway!

And then this verse says that when it comes to forgiveness, Jesus is to be our standard.

We're to forgive others, just as God through Christ has forgiven us.

In the movie - HOME ALONE

There is a scene where the little boy who has been left alone at home - and his scary neighbor - find themselves sitting together in the same pew at church.

The church is empty except for them because they are listening to a children's choir rehearse for the Christmas Eve service

I want you to listen in on this conversation.

SCENE FROM HOME ALONE

You know, there are a lot of people like that grandpa - - - maybe you.

Waiting for an apology - AFRAID to make the first move.

Holding on to the hurt - - holding on to the fear. . .

God may have brought you here this morning simply to say to you "Make The First Move"

Do you want to become a forgiving person?

Refuse to retaliate

Make the first move

And then third . . .

3. Do Right to those who've Wronged Me

Luke chapter 6, starting in verse 27 Jesus says .

"Love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. . . Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked."

Luke 6:27,28,35

Sometimes, when we think about forgiveness we think of being a doormat - - - but what Jesus is teaching here is active, aggressive, assertive forgiveness,

He's saying you be in charge, you be in control, you choose to act in a positive way

If you look at those verses you'll see four positive actions . .

Love . . . Do Good . . . Bless . . . Pray

You can't pray for somebody and hate them at the same time.

And as long as you hate somebody they control you.

How do you take control of your life again?

You choose to respond in a way that is totally unlike them.

Most of you at one time or another have seen at least a copy of Leonardo Da Vinci's painting

THE LAST SUPPER

But what you may not be familiar with is the story behind the painting.

Leonardo Da Vinci, just before he commenced work on his "Last Supper" had a violent argument with a fellow painter.

Da Vinci was so bitter that he made the decision to paint the face of his enemy, the other artist, as one of the characters there at the table at the Last Supper.

He would paint this artist's face as the face of Judas, and in this way get his revenge by immortalizing the other artists face as one that would be subjected to scorn for all succeeding generations.

Because of this, the face of Judas was, one of the first that he finished painting.

Da Vinci's plan worked - at least partially.

Everyone who saw his work was able to easily recognize the face of Judas as being the face of the painter with whom Da Vinci had his quarrel.

But then a strange thing happened.

When it came time to paint the face of Christ, Da Vinci could not make any progress.

It was as if something was blocking him, holding him back, frustrating his best efforts.

Finally he came to the conclusion that the thing that was frustrating him was that he had painted the face of his enemy onto the face of Judas.

Realizing this He painted out the face of Judas and was then able to resume his work on the face of Jesus and this time did it with success.

When DaVinci moved past his right to take revenge and made the right response instead, he broke the power of hatred and allowed the love of Christ to have the last word.

Someone once said: *"To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you."*

We've talked a lot about forgiveness this morning - and I know that some of us would probably be most comfortable if we left it right there - with just talking about forgiveness.

But a subject this important needs to not just be "talked about" it needs to be applied.

So once again, let me make this very personal and ask you to ask yourself . . .

Who Have I Not Forgiven?

There's a blank on your notes . . . I don't need you to fill in a name, maybe just an X

What is there in your life - maybe it's a recent wound, something that happened this week - - or maybe it's something that happened a long, long, time ago and you haven't dealt with it.

Recent History, or Distant Past - - either way you have got to deal with it.

Why???

Because hurts that aren't dealt with turn into bitterness.

"See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." Hebrews 12:15

I want you to think about those words for a moment while I ask you a question.

Have you ever wondered why - - -

So many Christians as they age sour instead of sweeten?

I don't think there is a one of us here, who intellectually wouldn't agree that this is not the way it's supposed to work.

What's supposed to happen is the longer we walk with Jesus the sweeter we get, the more like him.

Why then does it so often seem to go the other way?

The answer is in this verse. . .

When anger enters our lives - - - rather than dealing with it the way that Jesus teaches - through forgiveness - we allow it to become bitterness.

And that bitter root grows up, and it chokes out God's grace, which is something that we need desperately - not just when we come to Christ, but we need his grace every day in our lives.

And when we allow bitterness in our lives, it grows and chokes out God's grace and makes us miserable people to be around.

Because of this you need to forgive!

You say, "*I just can't! I can't forgive.*"

That's why you need Jesus Christ.

You can't, but He can.

Maybe the reason you're having such a hard time forgiving is because you've never really experienced God's forgiveness in your life.

You don't know what it means to walk out with a clear conscience and to know that all the garbage in your life that you're so ashamed of, God has forgiven and wiped the slate clean.

When you feel that, you will be more forgiving of others.

The FORGIVEN PERSON is the forgiving person.

The GRACED PERSON is the gracious person.

You need to say, "Jesus Christ, replace the pain in my life with Your peace

And, Jesus Christ, replace the hurt in my life with Your healing.

And, Jesus Christ, replace the bitterness in my life with Your love."

And He'll do it. Let's pray!!!!