

St. Andrews Presbyterian Church

traditional land of the Three Fires Confederacy: the Odawa, Potawatami and Ojibwe.

Box 93, Dresden, Ontario NOP 1M0

519-683-2442 standrewspcdresden@gmail.com Rev. Andy Cornell

Worship This Week Feb. 12, 2023

WELCOME & Prayer –

PRAISE SONGS – There's a quiet understanding, I worship you Almighty God

YOUNG & YOUNG AT HEART –

SONG – This is the day?

RECEIVE OFFERING

ANNOUNCEMENTS – New Bible study

GOD IS MY WITNESS –

PRAYER –

SCRIPTURE – Colossians 3:13-15

Make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you.

Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

MESSAGE –

Let's talk about forgiveness. We forgive each other all the time and it's usually for minor things. Losing your temper, saying something not nice – that sort of thing. Bigger things are harder to forgive. We can all think of things someone might do against us, something that would really hurt, that we'd struggle to forgive.

We're told repeatedly in scripture that God forgives our sins constantly. And because the Father forgives us, we are to forgive one another. Easy to say – not always easy to do.

We're also told that God will forgive people who commit horrible crimes. Not only against humanity but the church. The Apostle Paul, the great church planter and author of most of the New Testament, is a perfect example. He persecuted and ordered the execution of some of the apostles. There's not much worse.

While virtually every crime can be forgiven, only one cannot: blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Blasphemy means “lack of respect.” When you disrespect something or someone, you refuse to acknowledge their authority. You refuse to submit to the truth that is in them, or the facts. So when Jesus said there is only one sin that is unforgiveable, it refers to people who know that Jesus is the Son of God and the way to God, but choose to ignore it. They refuse to believe the obvious truth.

There are some believers who wonder if they are guilty of this. Rest easy. If you’ve even thought about it, you’re not guilty. If you worry about it, that’s proof that you know it’s true.

We live in an unforgiving world. All the conflict that’s out there is a sign that we don’t forgive one another for having different opinions. If we did, then the anger would subside and we’d agree to disagree. It’s nothing new. Paul was well aware of this human tendency and gave very specific instructions to the Colossians.

Make allowance for each other’s faults is actually a polite way of saying “to sustain, to bear (with equanimity), to bear with, endure. Have patience.” Equanimity means a “calm mental state when dealing with a difficult situation.”

If we are truly called to Christ and have accepted Him into our hearts and minds, then we are called to treat one another the same way He treats us. This is how the Holy Family of God operates. God is our true Father. If we believers are the Body of Christ then he is our Saviour and our brother. We are called to treat each other the same way.

While it’s relatively easy to accept, and bear each other within the church community, it’s not as easy outside the church. But we are called to love everyone the same way. No favourites. We should not treat others better just because they’re more like us.

We are miserable failures at this. Incurable is the old-fashioned word. We can’t be corrected. For someone who has high standards and lives by them, it’s not easy to live with those who have low standards and don’t care.

Some of us don't suffer fools gladly.

Now consider that Christ had the highest standard of behaviour of any human throughout history. And he lived it. A sinless life, without blemish. It must have taken a huge amount of energy to live among people who were so thick headed. How often did The Lord admonish the disciples for not understanding? He was so patient, often repeating the story and putting in different words.

Faith and spiritual practices were also something that were lacking. Recall the time the disciples were unable to cast out the evil spirit from the boy.

Jesus said, "You faithless and corrupt people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you?" -- Matthew 17:17 (also Mark 9:19, Luke 9:41)

This was as close as the Lord came to losing it. And yet he continued to put up with them, right until his dying day. In the Garden, hours before his arrest and trial, they couldn't even stay awake when the Lord – normally a pillar of strength – was in obvious distress. And recall also how Peter denied knowing Him three times. And yet all was forgiven. Not conditionally, either.

We must forgive anyone who offends us. Forgiveness is at the heart of the Gospel.

Those who are forgiven must themselves by forgiving. To Pardon. Freely, not grudgingly or reluctantly.

Consider the huge debt Jesus forgave. First, he wrote off the incredible sin of not recognizing the Son of God and then executing Him. That's how bad we are. And don't say, "It wasn't me, I wasn't alive at the time." That's a flimsy defence.

That's relatively small compared to the second thing: forgiving all sin from all of humankind for all time. It's beyond measure. We all sin, every day. Some people more than others. Some days are better, some worse. It's a constant flow. Let's say the typical person accumulates a million sins in their life. We have no idea how many individual lives have existed since creation, but some numbers have estimated 100 billion over the last 10,000 years. Do the math – it's 100,000 trillion. That's 1 with 18 zeros. Too much for the human mind to absorb.

Consider also:

God holds back His anger for a very long time when we sin against Him. He bears with us a long time, even when we provoke Him.

God reaches out to bad people to bring forgiveness to them. People find it difficult to reconcile the sins of those who have hurt us or others, especially when they're of bad character to begin with.

God makes the first move towards us in forgiveness. People tend to forgive only if the offending party makes the first move.

God forgives often knowing that we will sin again, sometimes in the exact same way. Odds are, if someone re-offends against you, it's that much harder to forgive again.

God's forgiveness is so complete, He actually adopts us into His family. How often do we truly embrace those who have offended us even if we have supposedly forgiven them?

God doesn't ask for anything in return. Odds are, we're only willing to forgive then the offender makes restitution first.

God keeps reaching out to us and forgives over and over. We are more likely to write someone off completely.

God forgives immediately, whereas we need to cool off first.

God's forgiveness includes complete restoration. People, by contrast, tend not to embrace those who have done wrong and if we do forgive, the relationship is changed forever.

God's forgiveness has no conditions. By contrast, we often say "I forgive you, but I won't forget."

God is capable of all this because he embodies perfect love. It's the greatest of virtues. This love "binds us all together in perfect harmony."

Forgiveness in love brings peace. It's a word often misunderstood. It's more than just living in harmony, agreeing to disagree without getting into a fight. It's deeper. It's described as the soul – which is at the core of our being – resting in the knowledge that we have nothing to fear in this life or the next, that we will be content, even joyful, in whatever situation we find ourselves. Peace is a kind of strength. It's the same strength that kept Christ going. It's something that does not and cannot come from ourselves or this world.

It's something that is found not only in the individual believer, but also – especially! – in the community of believers.

This is something that is only found in an authentic Christ-centred and Christ-following community. Authentic is not overstating it. It's the real thing. Authentic means pure, untainted. Authentic means it hits the mark.

It's a high calling for an individual, but the dividends are peace and strength and hope that cannot come from anywhere else. Any effort to live in peace on your own without Christ will not stand the test of time or circumstances.

It's a sure thing. It's the real thing. And it's the only hope for the world.

HYMN – 751 Forgive our sins as we forgive

BENEDICTION –