

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 5/20/2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

We've all heard the saying, "Forgive and forget." Jesus called us to forgive as we have been forgiven. We claim forgiveness because of Jesus' death on our behalf and we know that we are to extend forgiveness, not seven times but seventy times seven (which is a biblical way of saying "every time"). But I disagree with forgive and forget.

I don't think we should forget. Often, I don't think we can forget. There are things that have been done to us that have injured us, scarred us, permanently wounded us. These things often cannot be forgotten, nor should they be. Though they do not define us, they help us to understand how we were shaped and who we are now. They are our history and knowing your history is important.

Forgiveness, though, is also important. It can do some significant things for our present and our future. Forgiveness allows us to find freedom from feelings that would otherwise burden us in life. Forgiveness helps us claim closure after hurtful experiences. Forgiveness can help us move on.

I heard an interview with a woman whose uncle had been killed by a man who was convicted and went to prison. Fifteen years after his death, his family went to see the man who had shot him. This man told them how sorry he was for what he had done. He recognized what he had taken from their family and grieved that this had happened. He even spoke of a day when he hoped, as he would stand before the throne of God, that he would have the opportunity to tell the man he had killed his regret for his actions and to ask for forgiveness. This family extended to that man forgiveness. Not that they ever forget their loss or the pain they still feel. But that forgiveness, asked for and given, provided them the opportunity to let go.

What about when someone who has harmed us does not seek forgiveness from us? In these situations, we still can ask God to forgive the person. Though they might not admit that they have done anything wrong or recognize that they have hurt us, asking God to forgive them can still enable us find the freedom to move on. How many people have allowed themselves to remain trapped in the anger that has come from being wounded by the words or actions of another? Too often, they never find release because they demand or wait for a genuine apology that may not come. Again, in these times, we can still turn to the One who always promises mercy, name our anger or hurt, and then ask that we find release through forgiveness extended. Our example is Jesus, who when He was betrayed and crucified, asked that God forgive those who had done these things to Him. His example can guide us toward the healing and freedom that lets us continue with out the burden that might otherwise hold us down. Forgiveness provides the opportunity to move beyond our past and into God's future.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey