

Let us pray... God of wonder, you are holy. Create a space for holiness in our lives. Usher your Spirit in our midst. Inspire and transform us. May we find compassion, and may we share your grace and forgiveness with others... Amen.

My husband, Keenan loves to make instant coffee... But sometimes he does so in a way that drives me crazy.

He boils water in our lovely teapot, but he leaves the teapot on the stove while it whistles, and whistles, and whistles, and whistles.

A whistle that is more like a high-pitched scream...

And sometimes I simply can't stand it, so I go and take the tea pot off the burner and turn off the stove...

And then I immediately tell him, that his water is ready... As if the screaming tea pot wasn't enough of an indicator...

And his usual response is, going back to the stove, placing the tea pot back on the hot burner, turning the stove back on, and in just a few seconds or sometimes milliseconds it starts whistling again... and again... and again...

His reasoning... He needs to make sure the water is hot...

Now it's probably not fair that I pick only on him, as I know I drive him crazy with my quirks too... Such as keeping lights off, turning lights off after he leaves a room, or dimming lights, that is unless I'm working or reading.

But I have a strange feeling that we are not the only couple who drives each other crazy from time to time...

Because being in relationship is all about embracing life together... Where there are going to be quirks, tensions, conflict, and disagreement...

Where things like whistling teapots and turning off of lights doesn't really ruin a relationship...

Because after the noise has stopped or after the light is turned back on, it is forgotten and you move on...

Or maybe you bring it up in a sermon, or however it is that you poke fun of your loved ones...

But not all things that happen in our lives are so easy to forgive and move on...

Which is why I think Jesus shares this complex parable with us... To show us how difficult forgiveness can be.

And also, how tempting it is to offer cheap forgiveness.

Meaning we might say we forgive someone, but later we change our minds...

Which may be because we never really forgave them in the first place... Or because we didn't take the time to work through what forgiving them actually meant.

Because true forgiveness is hard. It is a process and a continuation...

It is learning to forgive and then relearning to forgive all over again.

Which seems like a lot...

But forgiveness can be a lot...

It can be very difficult to forgive someone who truly hurt you, or when someone repeatedly disrespects you.

Those things can chip away at your soul... They can eat away your empathy... And they can change your actual body chemistry.

For example, in the book, *The Body Keeps the Score* a group of therapists and scientists discuss how trauma, pain, and unprocessed grief impact our bodies in ways that are detrimental.

And then they share healthy ways to heal, ways that allow your body to process the trauma, pain, and grief.

As it is only after you process those things, that you can be open to the possibility of forgiveness.

And this kind of forgiveness might not lead to reconciliation.

Because not all forgiveness needs to lead to reconciliation.

Sometimes forgiveness is birthed out of love for yourself.

Especially in situations where it is unhealthy for you to talk to someone...

As forgiveness may not mean you literally tell someone you forgive them...

Or in some cases, it may not even be possible to tell someone you forgive them, because they have passed on...

Instead, this kind of forgiveness is for you... So that you can move on in ways that are life-giving and soul restoring.

And this kind of forgiveness is usually a life-long process...

Because situations that have had such a lasting impact on your life may require you working through them more than once. Requiring patience, practice, and may take a long struggle filled time.

Which may be why Jesus says we are to forgive 77 times... Not that this is an exact number, but it is a number that symbolizes that forgiveness is never one and done...

Because you are not meant to count how many times you forgive someone, or how many times you engage in the process, or how many times someone forgives you, or how many times you are forgiven by God.

Because forgiveness doesn't involve keeping a constant track of wrongs...

But it also doesn't mean ignoring what was done wrong.

Forgiveness is something deeper, and is not meant to be given from cheap grace.

Because nobody thrives off of cheap grace or cheap forgiveness.

As this only leads to our detriment. And it may in fact lead to throwing that person or ourselves into a prison...

Not a literal prison like we heard in the parable... But a prison in our minds where we brew thoughts of hatred, resentment, and distrust.

Where we torture ourselves for all the things, we have done wrong.

Which impacts our body and mind, because it is not healthy to live filled with hate, anger, guilt, and pain.

And God knows this... And God does not want these negative forces in our lives.

Which is why we start off our worship services with confession and forgiveness...

So, we can hear the most loving and grace filled words.... In the name of Jesus Christ, you are already, and always forgiven.

Words that invite us to thrive fully in God's love, grace, and mercy...

So that we can share that same forgiveness, love, grace, and mercy with others.

Because if we need forgiveness, then others do too.

Which is why we get this reminder every Sunday... But sometimes I think we need this reminder daily.

For example, my sister has this beautiful sign in her home that says... "In this house we do second chances. We do grace. We do real. We do I'm sorry. We do hugs. We do family. We do love."

A sign that is rooted in forgiveness.

Because healthy relationships only thrive in forgiveness... When we are able to wipe the slate clean on a regular basis and show some grace...

Which is why I do my best to not keep track of how many times Keenan leaves the teapot screaming... Or why he doesn't point out every single time I turn off a light.

Because relationships are living and dynamic. Sure, we can poke fun of each other from time to time.

But to make relationships really work, we need to share some grace.

We need to be ready to put in the work, to open the lines of communication, and to be honest with ourselves and with others.

Because just like we need food, water, and shelter to survive, we also need forgiveness, grace, and mercy.

As we are creatures that are meant to be in relationship, and relationships are only possible when forgiveness is given.

Forgiveness that you first received in Christ, so that you do not need to embrace the difficult work of forgiveness alone... Amen