

Devotion, Week of JULY 7, 2024

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

We just talked about forgiveness in Sunday School. This is a hard, hard subject. As a friend of mine said when we began a study on this topic at my previous church, “I don’t forgive. I get even!” As shocking as that sounded to all of us in the room, it certainly had a strong element of truth in it. Because that’s what a lot of us want to do when someone hurts us – an eye for an eye, not turn the other cheek.

Some folks think that forgiveness means you forget about the wrong done you – but that’s not true. We can’t forget when someone has hurt us. Forgiveness means that we just don’t let it eat us alive – we give up the hurt. If we’re lucky, we can reconcile with that person by giving the other person a chance to apologize, explaining how it hurt, and agreeing to move on with a new, healed relationship. But sometimes, that is not possible or appropriate. When there’s been abuse or a crime or the one who harmed us is no longer around, we may not have any personal relationship with that person again. And there are good reasons for that. But the one thing it is critical for us to do, is to at some point let go of the hurt. That may take a while, and that’s okay. It may take time to work through what happened to us and decide what, if anything, we can do to make it not happen again. But hanging on to it just gives us an excuse to stay angry or fearful or sad. God wants us to move on and live a loving, happy life, not to be engulfed by the muck of a past hurt.

Moving on is a different process for every person, especially when we can’t have a forgiving relationship with the other person. But moving on is what Jesus calls us to do. Forgiving means that we will not let the hurt we’ve experienced govern our life – because if we do, the person who harmed us now has power over us that we should not allow. We need to let it go and move on toward healing and restoration of wholeness.

And when we’ve hurt someone, it is imperative that we go to that person, apologize, own up to what we did, and ask for forgiveness. Ask, so that the person we hurt can be healed and restored to wholeness as well.

This is a hard thing – this business of forgiveness – but I hope you will put it into practice as a child of the God who always forgives you, if you just ask.

Jeanne