

Knuckles, Yolks, and Stingers
Forgiveness, Part One
Pastor Laura Hehner

So there are these moments, right?

These moments when your mind is stunned still, and finally all of that strength,
and independence, and straight-spined sense of ourselves---

---all of that *ego* we hide behind---

just drifts away, and leaves us standing there, by ourselves...

... feeling alone, and vulnerable as we can be,

without all of that sturdy stuff covering up the small things inside.

Those moments, when there are no more words we can use to change what just happened,
outside, here [space]-- between us and someone else.

What I'm talking about are those times in our lives when we miss the mark.

When we've made a mistake.

When we've done something wrong that can't be made to sound right
through more talk, or the noise of excuses...

And we're left standing there, with nothing left to give but an apology,

And we just wait, and hope,

to receive something in return we know we don't deserve.

In those times, what is it we stand there waiting for?

What is it we hope to receive? [wait for someone to answer]

...Forgiveness. [right?]

It's a powerful moment between you,
and that *other* you're hoping to receive that forgiveness, from, isn't it?
That pause can sometimes feel too long---so tense---
---while we wait to know if things will be okay.

And we experience it in a lot of different ways, in different moments,
with different people—different souls.

This idea of forgiveness isn't one to take too lightly---
---not as people just walking around doing our own thing,
but *especially* not as Christians.

These moments we experience between us when one or more of us
have realized someone's done something wrong,
are talked about a *lot* in the New Testament.

Our need to love each other is spoken of constantly by Jesus
in each of the moments he taught...

... and in so many of his words, our need to give and receive forgiveness
came along with that love.

Just to highlight the point, in the King James version of the bible,

The word "forgive" is mentioned 56 times,

The word forgiveness, 42.

And I think it's mentioned so often, because the need to forgive each other,
sadly happens, in proportion,

Just as often in our daily lives.

Some of this need for forgiveness comes with the smaller stuff. Easier stuff.

Like those moments when you think you can get away with it,

and head up the wrong way down the aisle of a parking lot,

And, *of course*, somebody comes along at exactly the same time, going the *right* way.

And ya kind of bashfully wave your hand behind the windshield,

hoping they're not too miffed about it, and might excuse what ya just did....

Then there are those less anonymous times when you're late to show up to get lunch with a friend,

And after rushing through too many traffic lights, and jogging into the restaurant,

You must an apology across the table as you finally fall down into the booth,

Just hoping that what you just did won't put some kind of damper on the next hour,

or that friend's understanding of the importance you place on your relationship.

There are sadly *millions* of tiny moments in our day-to-day lives

that ask for forgiveness...

...And on top of all of those, there are those BIG ones, too... right?

Those moments that can't be excused away by something casual---something usual.

Those moments when hitting traffic, or having your mind somewhere else,

or having a too many things to do in a single morning, just won't cut it...

...When *nothing* else can be held to blame for what happened
between you and someone else, but *you*.

And there's no other thing at fault but your own *decisions*.

---Very consciously, but thoughtlessly made.

Those *vulnerable* moments, when we've got no excuses left to hide behind,
and we're standing there in front of someone else--

With all of our ego blown away, and the small stuff inside, sitting bare, out in the open---
just hoping---praying---that those eyes you're looking into across that space
will give what you have no right in receiving.

Forgiveness.

It's a powerful, beautiful, and much *needed* thing---

---each day we're blessed to move around.

And I think that's exactly the reason Jesus spoke of it so often while he was alive.

Not because he wanted to breathe frightening threats of hellfire,

and send us on some kind of *guilt* trip, feeling bad about ourselves all of the time,

But because our need to give it, and receive it back,

reflects a *constant* reality in our relationship with the life around us.

---Because those moments when it's required between us,

we need to know how to face and experience more wholly,

if we hope to live in love with each other.

...If we hope to live and breathe the love of Christ and the gospels...the love of *God*...

Through each of these hours we---as imperfect people---

--bump and fumble our way through this life.

Understanding forgiveness is *crucial* to living our faith.

And with forgiveness being one of the most difficult things to take from the gospels

and give back in our own lives---

---‘Cause let’s face it. It’s *hard* to forgive.

Especially in the times when forgiveness is needed most---

...And because forgiveness is one of the most important ideas in Jesus’ teachings,

we’re not going to try and tackle the thought of it in a single morning.

No way.

To Lori’s relief, we’re not going to turn this into an hour long sermon,

trying to squeeze something so big into one moment of worship.

For the sake of our buns and brains, this morning is just an introduction.

--A moment to open our minds, and our hearts, and our souls

to the ways we experience forgiveness in our *own* lives.

Over the next few weeks, we’ll be meditating on what it means to give it, and to receive it.

We’re going to think, together, about what happens when *we* forgive *others*....

And past this, we'll think about that need for forgiveness
that goes beyond us and the faces around us.

---Meditating on happens when we ask forgiveness from *God*.

Over these days between this Sunday and next,
if you're looking for something to focus your soul on...

... if you've got some time to give to God as you move around,

Let's, each of us, pay close attention to what happens while we're out and about,

And even sitting at home.

And try our best to notice the moments that pop up,

when some kind of forgiveness is required between us.

... Those moments as small as when somebody bumps you in the grocery aisle,
or cuts you off on 285, going up and down the mountain.

... And maybe even to some of those bigger ones...

... the minutes that arise in our lives that require a lot more than a nice nod,

To let someone else know things are okay between you.

I think, in trying to stay mindful of these moments,

we'll see they come into play a lot more often than we normally realize.

Past this, if you've got some time to sit with the sacred,

Let's look into a few of the moments of *Jesus*' life, when he teaches about what
forgiveness *is*,

---how we experience it from God, and how we're asked to give it to each other.

Our reading from Luke, Ch 11, verses 1-12 will be covered as we move along together...

But it would good to look into these words in our personal time, too.

To really think about them---let them sink in.

...Reading it once, and putting it down, then reading it again later,

and even a third time later,

You'll find your mind goes different places with it,

each time, expanding what you saw at first glance.

And if you'd like to look into more, we'll list in the Monday Update,

some other passages we can read into, as well.

As we leave this sanctuary today, and walk back out into the world,

Let's open ourselves to our experience of God, and each other.

To those moments that sting and that soothe.

And let the truth of the gospels breathe in us

as we give and receive that always needed experience of forgiveness between us,

And hold on to the joy of God's love.

Amen.

