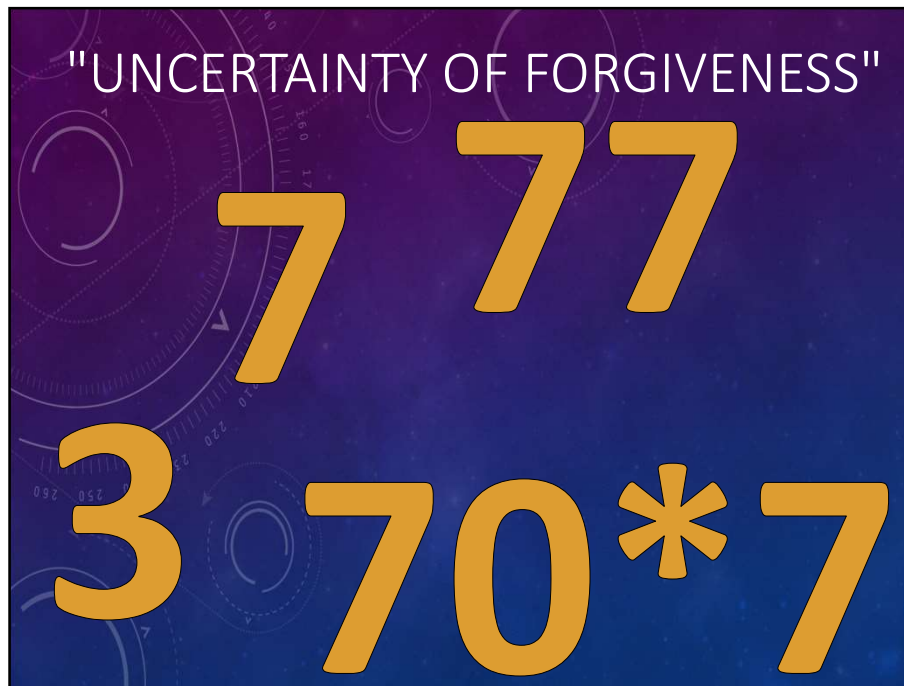


The world is filled with uncertainty - from the simple, “How will my friend react to my mistake?” to the more serious, “Will there ever be forgiveness between my Uncle and I?”

This Lenten sermon series will show you that it is only by embracing the uncertain – facing it, instead of fearing it – that we fully experience the power of faith in Christ and his resurrection. Christine and I hope to show you that we can follow Christ with courage, hope, and an obedience that leads to joy. For we discover that after the world quakes - it is because of the empty tomb that the ground has settled, making our footing is secure -the only source of a firm foundation to build our lives upon is Jesus.



We all want there to be a finite number of times we should forgive others. Peter thought by offering 7 times, he was outdoing the rabbinic teaching of 3! But Jesus 'exploded his brain' – "Forgive 77 or 70x7 times!" - Seven, the number of perfection, of completeness of wholeness that is good. Jesus was telling Peter (and us) that forgiveness is not about how many times, not just about the two people, but about something more complete - participation in God's work to restore all creation! When we forgive from the heart and find a better relationship on the other side, that is what God intended from the start. It's why Jesus forgave us as the greatest example.

"UNCERTAINTY OF FORGIVENESS"



We all have had times that I took a long time to forgive someone or to go to someone and explain your hurt – so that they ask forgiveness. Why? – Because it's about us, about right and wrong, about punishment and reparations... [Personal Example of Pastor from College]

If we wait to forgive or seek forgiveness, it can often be a heavy weight we carry that burdens our soul. We often want to forgive and forget – but we cannot forget; and giving only lip-service to the forgiveness and hoping never to see that person again doesn't free us or heal us. If you just can't because it would cause more harm, or the pain too great, the best example I know is a woman who worked at an addiction facility for men instead of forgiving the man who harmed her because of addiction. After four years of serving in this way she was still not ready to forgive, but was able to better understand the one who harmed her.

"UNCERTAINTY OF FORGIVENESS"

“[Forgiveness] is how we are able to move forward into our future, unfettered by the mistakes we [and others] have made.”

– Bishop Desmond Tutu

We are to be people of forgiveness – Christians, Christ Followers are to forgive from the heart and make our face point to an uncertain future with hope. “It is how we are able to move forward into our future, unfettered by the mistakes we [and others] have made.” – Bishop Desmond Tutu

Forgiveness ends the cycle of bitterness, revenge, and grudge-holding that destroys people and relationships.

[Habitat Example from Jackson Mississippi – one who was stolen from, helps young man find and keep a job instead of hating.]

"UNCERTAINTY OF FORGIVENESS"



While you can attempt to forgive others or seek forgiveness from others, there are also times when you need to forgive yourself. Whether you caused yourself or someone else pain, and are deeply sorry for it, you can ask God and you need to ask yourself to be forgiven – not to forget – but to experience the grace and mercy of God to move past your guilt and shame – claiming the life of peace God wants for you. Remember, it's not about punishment and reparations, its about healing and hope.

UNCERTAINTY OF FORGIVENESS

WE ARE NOT ALONE
God is with us!

Forgiveness is a difficult task. There is never a guarantee that granting it or receiving it will make everything right – and we unfortunately cannot totally forget offenses. But we are called to forgive – and push the pain away from being the center of who we are. If we are people of forgiveness, our emotions, our reactions, our essence will be of hope instead of dread. We are called to forgive – as a sacred cooperation with God – who calls us to heal the brokenness of the world and who empowers our souls to trust with absolute conviction that God has forgiven us through Jesus Christ. What steps do you need to take in the next few days to forgive and be forgiven? – Ask God to recalibrate your motivation for forgiveness so that all might find healing. Amen.