**Forgiveness – “One-Off Message”**

**October 20-21, 2018**

What’s up, everyone?! I’m excited about our topic today because I think it is one of the most important things about having a relationship with Jesus. Now, I could probably say that about a lot of things, but this particular topic is considered so extreme, so crazy, so unthinkable by many people and that’s why it stands out.

**(Leaders Note: Share a story where you personally had to show radical forgiveness to someone – or a situation where you were shown radical forgiveness. Be as open as you feel comfortable.)**

As you can probably tell, today’s topic is all about forgiveness. There’s one thing that’s true about forgiveness: it’s very difficult. VERY difficult. To some people, it feels unfair and impossible. You might think, “That person doesn’t deserve to be forgiven! You have no idea what they did to me.” You know what…you’re right. They probably don’t deserve it. However, ALL of us are sinful and none of us deserve to be forgiven, but the Bible says that anyone CAN be forgiven no matter what. We can be forgiven, and we should also forgive others, even though there’s a great cost.

**THP: Forgiveness comes with a cost.**

Now, I don’t literally mean “cost”…as in money, but I do mean that forgiveness comes with a cost to your life. It might cost you what seems fair, it might cost you to change in some way, it might cost you giving a person another chance. For example, let’s say I came over to your house and I accidentally tripped and knocked over and broke your mom’s really expensive lamp. I say “I’m so sorry!” and ask for forgiveness. Well, we have three options: 1) just let it sit there and stay broken (not really an option), 2) I can pay for it, or 3) You can pay for it. Someone has to absorb the cost. Forgiveness always has a cost.

Ultimately, Jesus came to this earth and His purpose was to save the world from their sins. We can only be saved from our sin if we are forgiven, and ultimately, it cost Jesus His life. We’ll talk about that later. First, I want us to look at two people in the Bible who experienced forgiveness from Jesus personally and how they responded to it. The first is a man named Zacchaeus. We can read about him in the New Testament in Luke 19:1-10.

*“Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.” But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*

Couple of things that I want you to notice: Zacchaeus was forgiven by Jesus. It said, “He welcomed him gladly.” Tax collectors were considered some of the worst sinners in that culture because they took advantage of people and their money. Zacchaeus is obviously very sad and sorry for what he’s done. However, he takes it a step further: he takes action and starts living differently. He gives people their money back and becomes a more generous person.

Now, Jesus doesn’t forgive him BECAUSE he changed. Jesus would have forgiven him regardless. In Mark 3, Jesus tells a crowd of people that “people can be forgiven of all their sins.” However, forgiveness should lead to change: turning away from that sin and living a new way that honors God. The Bible calls this “repentance” or “to repent.” This part is key for the next story we’ll look at.

The second example of forgiveness is one of Jesus’s disciples: Judas. Some of you may have heard of him. If you don’t know anything about Judas, he was one of Jesus’s 12 disciples: some of his closest friends and followers. We find out in the book of John that Jesus knew who would love and worship Him, who really DIDN’T believe (they just said they did), and who would eventually betray Him. The person who would betray Jesus was Judas.

The night of Jesus’s arrest, He and His disciples were sharing a meal together; the last time they were all together before Jesus was crucified. Check out what happens in Matthew 26:20-25: *“When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.” They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, “Surely you don’t mean me, Lord.” Jesus replied, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.” Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely, you don’t mean me, Rabbi?” Jesus answered, “You have said so.”*

Now, it’s not like all the other disciples turned around and looked at Judas and were like, “I KNEW IT! I always thought he was shady!” By all indications from the New Testament, Judas was just like the other disciples: he listened to Jesus’s teaching, helped perform miracles, helped cast out demons, etc. In fact, just a few verses before what we just read, it tells us that Judas had already gone to the high priests and asked how much money he could make if he turned Jesus in for a crime. He was going to betray his best friend; he was going to betray the Son of God!

All of us have been hurt by someone before: something they said, something that was done to us. It’s terrible. If that’s happened to you, Jesus knows EXACTLY how you feel. We find out later Judas thought what he had done was unforgivable, and how he had lost all hope. He eventually takes his own life. As awful as that is, Jesus DID forgive him. Jesus knew Judas would do that to him…and STILL forgave him even when he said, “One of you will betray me tonight.” Jesus forgave those who were crucifying Him as they were doing it. Jesus forgives you and me even though he knows we are imperfect people and we are going to disobey him. Forgiveness has a cost…it cost Jesus His life!

Maybe you’re here and you need to forgive someone. Maybe it’s a best friend that betrayed you or said something to you or about you to someone else. Maybe your parents got a divorce and you’re having a hard time forgiving either or both of them. Maybe you’ve been bullied tirelessly by someone at school. You can’t stand that person because of how much they’ve hurt you. **You can only forgive with God’s help through Jesus. It will be impossible without Him.**

Let’s change it up: maybe YOU are the one who hurt someone else. Maybe you’re the bully or the betrayer. Maybe you have said something to a friend or a family member that you wish you could take back. You need to go and say “Sorry” and ask for forgiveness. **You can only be forgiven with God’s help through Jesus. It will be impossible without Him.** Let’s remember our THP: Forgiveness comes with a cost. That cost is worth it because it was worth it to Jesus. If we are His followers, then we need to be the most forgiving and gracious people on the planet. Let’s pray!