**“For The Win” – Week 3 (Forgives The Unforgivable)**

**March 24/25 – Spirit Day!**

We are wrapping up our “For The Win” series today and I hope these deeper messages have been challenging you guys (in a good way) and really stretched you to think about who Jesus is and what he means for your life. Today, we are going to finish up by looking at our final “win” of Jesus’ life!

First, let me ask you this…how many of you have ever been blamed for something that you didn’t actually do? Yeah, that’s no fun! Now, I bet some of you who are raising your hands weren’t COMPLETELY innocent, but you definitely didn’t think it was your fault. Well, that happened to me once as well…

**(Leaders Note: Share a quick story where you were blamed or punished for something you didn’t actually do)**

The Bible tells us in Hebrews 4 that Jesus understands our weaknesses and knows exactly what we are going through because he went through many of the same things. The only difference—he didn’t sin! Unlike us, Jesus lived a sinless life, but that doesn’t mean there aren’t significant challenges in our life. I think it’s kind of silly on our part to think, “Oh, well if these problems or sins or people would go away or not make my life miserable, then everything would be perfect.” I think what we really mean by perfect is “easy.”

The reality is that being a Christian is NOT easy sometimes. It’s hard! Once again, Jesus, the person we all follow as Christians, experienced betrayal and he also experienced being falsely accused of something he didn’t do…and that’s what we’re going to look at today.

**Our THP for today is this—THP: Jesus forgives the unforgivable.**

In Matthew 27, we read about Jesus being put on trial because the people were outraged that he was considered the Son of God or a King. They thought he was trying to overthrow the government and his followers would kill all the political leaders. Obviously, we know that’s not true, but they falsely accused him of doing so. Jesus came to Pilate, the governor in the area, to decide what his fate would be. People were shouting loudly and accusing Jesus of all kinds of things he didn’t do. Pilate said, “Don’t you hear them? What do you have to say about that?” Jesus never said a word.

Check out what happens next in Matthew 27:15-23: *“Now it was the governor’s custom each year during the Passover celebration to release one prisoner to the crowd—anyone they wanted. This year there was a notorious prisoner, a man named Barabbas. As the crowds gathered before Pilate’s house that morning, he asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you—Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?” (He knew very well that the religious leaders had arrested Jesus out of envy.) Just then, as Pilate was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him this message: “Leave that innocent man alone. I suffered through a terrible nightmare about him last night.” Meanwhile, the leading priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas to be released and for Jesus to be put to death. So the governor asked again, “Which of these two do you want me to release to you?” The crowd shouted back, “Barabbas!” Pilate responded, “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” They shouted back, “Crucify him!” “Why?” Pilate demanded. “What crime has he committed?” But the mob roared even louder, “Crucify him!”*

They let a known murderer go instead of letting Jesus, an innocent man, go free. It’s outrageous! Why would they release someone they knew to be a criminal and kill a perfect man who had done no wrong? That doesn’t make any sense! Or does it? Check this out…

**(Leaders Note: Show the “Jesus Loves Barabbas” video)**

The greatest love that has ever been shown was by Jesus taking our punishment and our place on the cross. Anyone who has lied, cheated, spoke unkindly to someone, bullied someone…murderers, criminals, terrorists…it doesn’t matter. Jesus took the punishment that we deserved from God. However, because he did that, we can now have a relationship with God.

No one is too far from God. No sin and no person is unforgivable in Jesus’ eyes. Jesus can AND DOES forgive the unforgivable. If you are a Christian, I hope this message reminded you of God’s amazing and sacrificial love. If you aren’t a Christian, I hope today has challenged you to think about what this man did for you and maybe you didn’t even know it. Have you ever experienced God’s forgiveness for your sin? Have you accepted his love for you and committed your life to Jesus. Did you know the Gospel or the good news of Jesus is that Jesus lived a sinless life on your behalf and then died on a cross for your sins so you could be loved, forgiven, have a second chance, and have hope and a future. If not, I want to give you the opportunity to do that today.

**(Leaders Note: Move into Gospel Presentation)**

**I want every head bowed and every eye closed. I’m going to close us in prayer and if you are ready to take the first step in becoming a Christian today…then I want you to repeat this prayer after me (to God) silently to yourself. *Dear Jesus, thank you for saving me. I know that I have done things that are wrong in my life. I can’t live this life on my own. I need You. Please forgive me of my sins. I commit to follow You for the rest of my life. Thank you for loving me no matter what. I place my faith and trust in You and You alone. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.***

If you just said that prayer for the first time, this is your first step as a new follower of Christ. That is awesome! It is the best decision that you will ever make! I want you to do three things for me if you made that decision…

-Tell someone (family, friends, leaders)

-Get a Bible (if you need one, let your leader know and we can get you one!)

-Get baptized during the next baptism service!

If you ever need someone to talk to, all of the leaders are available to listen to you and help you in any way that we can. Love you guys! Let me pray and we’ll go to our group discussions!