

Monday, January 26, 2009

This past Christmas at Calvary Church we celebrated the "Magnificent Mystery", the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. In these next weeks would you consider what it really means to "Live the Magnificent Mystery"? By that I mean, living everyday in a vital, authentic, life transforming relationship with Jesus Christ . . . the purpose for which Jesus came to earth?

When Adam and Eve chose the talking serpent's lies and turned away from their perfect, open and safe relationship with God (Genesis 3), you'll recall God poured out justice. God is Holy and fair, and therefore they could not remain in the place or relationship they had before they turned away from Him. Re-read Gen. 3, and gain a fresh perspective on how much changed that day.

You'll recall things declined rapidly in the "first family", and their descendants, until in Gen. 6, God concluded He must end wicked human life . . . the global flood. Note God's assessment of Mr. Noah, and God's rescue plan for he and his family. What do you see is the fundamental basis of Noah's rescue from death in the flood? Would you agree it is faith; belief in God's truth; obedience to God's offer to be saved? How similar is that with what Jesus said in John 5:24? Or God's offer to Lot and his family regarding their rescue from judgment poured out on Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen. 18 & 19? Or God's offer of deliverance to 120,000 people in the city of Ninevah, through Jonah? (Jonah 3)

Here's the point: God is motivated by His core nature of unconditional, unwavering, unlimited LOVE for the human race made in His image. He longs for a love relationship with each person and grieves the thought they would choose "NO" to Him, for in His holy justice, that "NO" must result in eternal separation from God! Note please, 2 Peter 3:9 and Ezekiel 33:11. Forgiveness is conceived in God's Holy love. The cross stands as the ultimate symbol of that indescribable love. How do you thank God for that?

Tuesday, January 27, 2009

How far would you go to protect or rescue your child or grandchild? Read Luke 15 today. Three short stories of people who lost things they deeply valued, and what they did to restore what was lost. What do you see in each? If you've ever lived on a farm, you understand the emotions behind the first account of searching for a lost lamb. If you've ever been in a very tight financial situation, you understand the great relief for the woman who found a coin valued at 10% of all she had.

Look closely at the story of the son who carelessly took his inheritance, left home, and squandered life. What key attitudes in BOTH sons? We can assume this was a Jewish family, thus the idea of "feeding pigs" was beyond desperation. What do you see in attitudes of the father, first in giving the requested inheritance, then in releasing his son to leave, then in watching for his returning son, and finally in bringing unity to his family? Can you make the application to God and us? As we demand freedom to live our lives as we desire, squandering the privileged relationship God offers His love creation, are we like that young son?

Look closely at the depth of repentance and remorse that young son had in returning to his father. Do you often see this in us . . . or do you more often find most of us resisting repentance, humility, open acknowledgment of our sin . . . and trying to gain God's approval and forgiveness through ways other than admitting our desperate condition? Psalm 51 is David's cry for help, having lived Psalm 32 for too long. It's a good model.

God's love forgiveness is beautifully represented in the father's response to the lost son. If you've ever forgiven a long rebellious child, perhaps you have a glimpse. We can imagine this son lived "the Magnificent Mystery" of true forgiveness, with great delight, for a long time thereafter. What is Jesus trying to teach you?

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

Do you remember the most precious "forgiveness" you've ever received from someone? Even now, as you think back, what feelings rise up within you? Forgiveness awakens huge emotions within both parties . . . the one extending forgiveness and the offending recipient. True forgiveness clears out shame and guilt, resentment and anger. True forgiveness cleanses and begins a healing process which no medication could ever do. Forgiveness awakens hope, brings peace, and energizes. Few things give you a sense of "new beginning" more than forgiveness. How does all that happen? It's not physical, nor simply emotional . . . forgiveness is a mystery . . . a deeply spiritual experience that is life changing, would you agree? It's a God designed experience unique to His relationship with humanity. Not even angels experience forgiveness, for those who rebelled with Lucifer have been driven permanently out of His presence.

Romans 5 & 6 are strong explanations of God's perspective on human rebellion and forgiveness. Work through these chapters carefully. Watch for key statements which help define God's forgiveness. You see the comparison between Adam and Jesus, and the results of their action. From Adam's sin, every man is born into sin. From Jesus' sinless personal sacrifice, every man has forgiveness rescue (redemption) available to them. When we acknowledge our sin, our guilt of rebellion against God; we repent (turn away from our sin and turn to God); and we recognize God has paid the full death price for His justice to be met, then "forgiveness" is extended to us while relationship is restored . . . relationship which enables us to live no longer as "slaves to sin". The mystery deepens!

Forgiveness invites God's cleansing work (1 John 1:9), which rebuilds (reconciliation) the torn relationship between you and God. With the cleansing work done, God declares justification, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in a "new creation" in Christ, and you can live Romans 8!!!

Thursday, January 29, 2009

In living the "magnificent mystery" of Forgiveness, have you noticed there are many counter factors? Why? Simple, you have an enemy who is determined to keep you in bondage to living rebellion against God. That enemy does all he can to keep your heart hard against God; draw your mind to skepticism about God and God's truth; overwhelm your emotions with guilt/shame, and awaken fear that you could never change, never be rescued, never have hope. Since he (Satan) will never be forgiven and will spend eternity in the "lake of fire" (Rev. 20), his great desire for you and me is that we join him! That's living despair . . . know anyone who is living there?

Read Ephesians 1 carefully, to see that God's plan for your rescue was devised long before you even existed! I urge you to take paper and pencil and carefully make note of every different aspect of God's great forgiveness plan for you . . . I think you will be amazed! Then continue your reading into Ephesians 2:1-10 for even further clear explanation of this great mystery.

Now, I urge you to do the same with Colossians 1, making careful note of who Jesus is and all He has accomplished so your forgiveness is certain, secure and sufficient to break the hold of Satan in your life!!

Now, let's go back to my opening paragraph today, and in view of what you've just studied in Ephesians 1,2 and Colossians 1 . . . may I invite you to do something strategic. Make a list of those 'tactics' which Satan uses on you when he tries to get you to believe forgiveness is not real, or not for you, or is not lasting. With each 'tactic' you list, can you find God's confident response in Eph. 1,2 and Col. 1?

Satan hates the truth of God's Word. These type of exercises cause him and his demons to withdraw in shame, for their primary weapon is deceit (John 8:44).

Friday, January 30, 2009

I hope by now you have discovered great new truths and gained new strength in our study of God's forgiveness, this week. Today, consider this: The evidence of your understanding and personal ownership of God's forgiveness is the ease and joy with which you forgive others!

Ephesians 4:32 simply states it: "Forgive one another just as in Christ, God forgave you." Think that through!

Colossians 3:12-15 expands on it a bit . . . "bear with each other, forgiving WHATEVER grievances you may have against one another."

1 Corinthians 13:5 goes further yet "love keeps no record of wrongs", in other words, when forgiveness is extended the issue needs to be over . . . forever!

Psalms 103:11, 12 assures us God removes our sin guilt from us as far as east is from west (immeasurable).

Now . . . take a breath . . . can we offer this same type of forgiveness to the ones who have wounded us, rebelled against us, turned others against us?

Read Matthew 18 carefully.

Note the humility of a child that God values so highly in vs. 1-14, and God's warnings for those who turn children away from Him. Forgiveness begins with a soft, humble heart and an understanding of how much God loves you and the one you need to forgive.

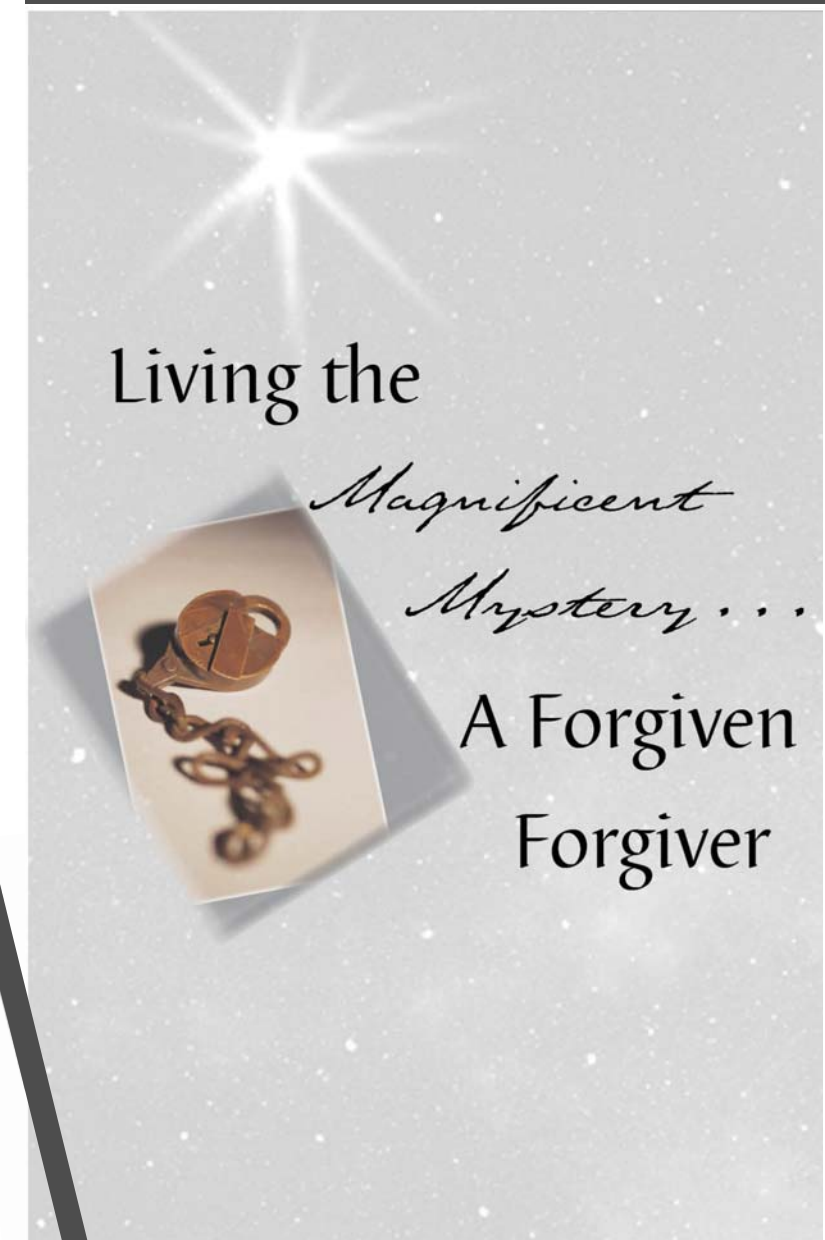
Vs. 15-20 is not about "building your case" but rather a pathway to help rescue the one who has hurt you, and is lost in deep hardness of heart, even if it takes the prayers and love of the entire church to bring them to repentance and forgiveness!

Vs. 21-35 is a stern warning . . . look carefully, how well are you and I living out to others, the forgiveness God has extended to you and me?



Pastor Doug Anderson

January 26 - 30, 2009



A Disciplemaking Tool
**DIGGING
DEEPER**


Engaging With God
Highway 50 & Harris Road
P.O. Box 1200 • Williams Bay, WI 53191
(262) 245-6294
www.calvarycommunity.net