

What is Jesus Doing?

YOU ARE FORGIVEN, NOW FORGIVE!

I was at a Bible Study last night that volunteers give weekly at the local Homeless Services hub, called the Samaritan Center here in Simi Valley. It was a great night. My wife, Donna, had decided to join us and there were about 15 of us, in all, clients of the Center who make the weekly commitment to dive into the Word of God, and several good friends who love the fellowship and are friends of the poor (as Jesus was).

I was not teaching last night, but facilitated the meeting, which involves everyone stating what they were most grateful for in the past week, and ending in focused prayers for each other. My friend Joe, a beautiful saint who happens to be wheelchair-bound, was teaching on our need to forgive. He did a great job and illustrated his lesson with a great sports story about a famous baseball player's violent feud with another player, and how through the power of forgiveness, two enemies became life-long friends to the Glory of God.

When he started the lesson, Joe said that forgiveness and love are both pleasing to God but in his mind, forgiveness is more difficult than love. That statement provoked the Holy Spirit in me to rise up with a Word of understanding. I wrote down these words. "Forgiveness is the hardest APPLICATION of Love." (sic)

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

- 1 John 4:8

No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

- Jeremiah 31:34

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For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

- Matthew 6:14

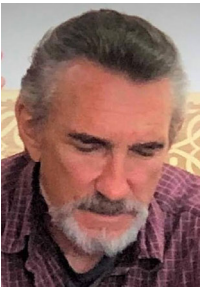
If we are to love as God loves, then we are called to forgive as God forgives. Forgiveness is a function of Love and Love is What/Who God IS.

When I think of forgiveness I think of Jesus on the Cross saying "Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do". Moreover, the Holy Spirit showed me a picture years ago of Jesus' face as He looked up into the eyes of the Roman Centurion who was nailing him to the Cross. I believe that there was nothing but LOVE in our Savior's eyes as He looked upon His child. I believe that this Roman soldier was forever changed by that gaze and may, in fact, have been the soldier who proclaimed at Jesus' death while the earth was quaking, "Truly THIS Man was the Son of God!"

Since those of us who are saved AND sanctified have the Holy Spirit Who informs us moment by moment, He will bring to mind, on occasion, those things that we have left undone, unsaid or must make amends for... The first reaction of any human being on remembering old hurts is to fall back into the old defenses and hard attitudes of the past. We ARE after all, flesh and blood as well as spirit. In these moments we saints must DECIDE to take the role of Peacemaker seriously and RESPOND to the Spirit in Love instead of REACTING in the old anger or pain when He brings it to our attention. As with picking up your cross and following Jesus (see Blog # 3), when we DECIDE to agree with the Spirit and DO something about it, the Spirit agrees with us and we feel an enormous sense of the Joy of the Lord (because He is glorified). He may then give you wisdom and a mandate to act further, or He may not, but if your repentance of your own unforgiveness is genuine, than that is usually enough. That is how to APPLY love as forgiveness, with the Love of God that lives in you being both the generator of the desire to forgive and also source of strength to DO it.

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By the way, my wheelchair-bound buddy is the greatest example of forgiveness in a saint I have ever known personally. He lost his ability to walk AND the love of his life in the same car accident caused by a drunk driver who crossed the center divider without warning. Joe struggled with anger and unforgiveness for a little while, during his recuperation, but called on the Lord's Peace to overcome his anger and God delivered him from it. When I met Joe several years ago I was struck by the beautiful smile on his face looking up from that wheelchair. I have never seen him any other way but joyful. We should all be as faithful as my good friend Joe.



Blessings abundant,

- John Henry Raskin, Roadhouse Rabbi