

**Lenten Service
April 4, 2019**

“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”

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That’s how powerful the Lord’s Prayer is, individually to each of us as we go forward with another witness, and that’s what you hear each Wednesday. How this prayer takes life in us personally as we pray it and move it forward, because, as I said in the first testimonial and the first group, we are already called upon God the Father Almighty to be present with us, and he comes and he listens. Forgiveness, forgiveness is a pretty neat word. I mean I like that word, as long as I’m forgiven. But, it is a bit of a struggle if it goes the other way, isn’t it? Because we have this innate nature that says, “I’m not ready yet,” or “I don’t have to,” or “I don’t want to.” Anything you want to conjure up, but we all have this little thing in us that forgiveness of us to someone else who has done some wrong against us. It’s a little more powerful, but if someone forgives us, I’m right there. I read a Psalm, Psalm 130 where the psalmist is talking about forgiveness, and he’s bringing forth an emotional word of desolation. He’s really getting to the bottom of why he’s crying to the Lord, a complete state of destruction. He’s overwhelmed with misery, great distress, guilt, the feeling of having done wrong, and he can’t dismiss it, almost forsaken, like it’s his last chance. And he knows that God will hear him, and he waits. Shows the depth of sinfulness if we are honest. We must admit these depths in attitude, behavior, and our human state of original sin. It’s in us. But do you know what? God still hears us. That’s the graciousness of God the Father Almighty, in his mercy and his compassion, in his forgiveness towards someone who has done something wrong, to him, to his law, to his whole creation. God forgives us, and another thing in this Psalm, he doesn’t remember. In other words, he doesn’t hold a grudge. He keeps going; he keeps growing. He grants them free forgiveness through the work of Jesus Christ. He’s gracious. This Lenten path that we’re following, God plunges into our sorry state so deeply in the prayer that he taught us to pray like. But he plunges so deeply into us, giving us hope, a feeling of expectation that something will happen, and that raises us up into salvation.

Many times in the hospital I hear this, or many times when people are sick and desolate, I hear this, “If it wouldn’t be for my faith, I don’t know what I’d do.” We come humbly before God now, and we bear out our sins, our rebellion, our natural state of hopefulness, and we cry out to the Lord, to the God of all rules, to Lord Jehovah who can do all things, the God of salvation and forgiveness, “Hear me, O Lord. My life, my soul hangs on a thread of your divine compassion. Without you, I’m nothing. I’m gone. The suffering and misfortune of others I don’t even care about. I care about myself. Help me, Lord.” With the Lord, he says to us, “Nothing is impossible. I gotcha. I have you. I have you in my compassion.” God forgives freely, willingly, in order that he may be, and I’m going to give you this word, feared. Remember all those statements, fear and love the Lord thy God? Fear is a reverent, deep, and solemn respect, keeping God’s commandments, doing his will, avoiding sin, knowing that God is almighty and can punish us and destroy us for disobedience, but he doesn’t. That is the all we look to him for. And God forgives us for his name’s sake, and God seeks only to glorify his name’s sake. That’s why we stand in awe of God’s name. We don’t stand in despair. Our fears are dismissed. We walk boldly and confidently into God’s grace, into God’s word. It penetrates our soul. It binds itself to

our soul. It enlightens love, attitudes, thankfulness, everything in the soul outside of it and inside of it. The consequence is gone. Freedom, peace, joy, and hope, belonging, comfort, and we stand in awe.

Have you heard the feelings go in the witnesses? I mean they kind of jump out from you. And to bring it home, Jesus taught us to pray. He said, "Pray like this." Jesus said, "Pray like this." I believe I'm included when Jesus says, "Pray like this." And I believe the Lord's Prayer is just as much for me as it is for everybody around, because we grab hold of this. We know the powerful, loving God waits for our humble, honest, egoless words, to forgive us our trespasses, forgive us our debts, forgive us our sins, literally all the same trespasses, the transgressions, an act against God's command and rule. "Lord God Almighty, "Luther says, "Do not look upon our sins or retain them. Do not hold a grudge for debt, but wipe them out, erase them." That's interesting, isn't it? Erase them. We have all these erasers that we buy in the store that erases our lead point on our paper, and we still have that little bitty copy in there if we press hard. God erases them, cancels them from every book, list, chart, accounting. All entries against us, they're gone. And God doesn't come back at them. That's how forgiving our God is.

And we forgive, forgive as we have never forgiven before. By the way, "as we forgive" is really in the past tense in the Greek, meaning as we also have forgiven. Isn't that right? Do we even have a decision to make? Forgiveness from God has created in us a merciful heart to forgive those that trespass against us. Now, how about that? There's no decision there. He says, "Forgive them." Yet, our act of forgiveness doesn't come before God. It is not a condition of forgiveness. Our forgiveness is a fruit, a product of God's act upon us, a consequence, a result of an effected action upon us. For God's complete forgiveness of us, even original sin, that has grown together and fosters in us an unconscious and conscious in a motivation sometimes for us to sin. St. Paul says it to the Galatians, "We become forbearing when God forgives us." Forbearing means patient (Oh, be careful with that word.), restrain (Be careful with that word.) toward one another and forgive one another. If any man has a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do you receive him. That's a tough act to be with. Be kind, be generous toward one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ's name has forgiven you. What a spiritual struggle that we can go through each and every day of our lives, including missing a parking spot, including getting stepped on by something, including big things in family that has gone for years. I lived in a farm community, and people still have not forgiven 1 farmer for knocking down his gate back in 1929. Oh, forgive and let go – wow! The Spirit works personally with us. God knows all our hidden passions and transgressions, all our issues, all our ignorances, all our stupidities, all our habits, all our transgressions. He wants a forgiveness of the heart. Be not fearful to think that God doesn't know what's going on. We have the government to give justice, and justice prevails in consequences of the ignorant, the unforgiving, the stubborn, the prideful of heart. It's there. That's why we visit the prisons; that's why we do things like that. God is talking about forgiveness of the heart, and no one gets away with anything. It's just that we don't have to give it back to them. All justifications and defenses are out. I guess we say, "May our hearts be clean of all justifications and confessions, our inborn nature, so that we realize God's forgiveness?" These are the words of power. These are the words of might. These are the words of hope and freedom on our lips to be received and granted and believed by our Lord.

Oh, Lord, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Amen and yes, Lord, yes. It shall be so. Amen.