**Luke 23:26-49 April 1, 2020**

**Lent Midweek 5 “Forgive us our Trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” Lord’s Prayer in the Lord’s Passion Series**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It sounded so tame in the past when we got to these words in the Lord’s Prayer. “And forgive us our **trespasses** as we forgive those who **trespass** against us.” The first definition of the word trespass you’ll find in a simple google search is the one that immediately enters my head when I hear these words or see them on signs as you are passing by someone’s land. The definition of trespass: to enter the owner’s land or property without permission. And we shouldn’t do this, we know that, and of course we would include it in any confession we make to our Lord at a time of confession and receiving absolution. But now the stakes have been raised. Trespassing now has a severe penalty in that during a time of lockdown and quarantine to trespass onto someone’s property or into their house could very well mean infecting them and their entire family. It can even mean infecting them unknowingly, and therefore infecting an even larger group until the infected party starts to show symptoms of the disease. And how do we look at trespassers? Could you honestly forgive someone who broke into your house, infected you and your family, or even was the cause for the death of a loved one because of their negligence and their irresponsibility? For so long we’ve understood these words in the Lord’s Prayer to be in reference to the second definition: commit an offense against (a person or a set of rules) that trespass really means any sin, but how quick would we be to forgive the specific sin of trespassing when it would come with such horrible ramifications?

Could we forgive them? For trespassing and infecting? Usually someone trespasses to cause bodily harm or to steal. Could we forgive them for that? Could we forgive them for just trespassing out of curiosity or boredom? Wandering onto our property by mistake? What is the example we’re shown when it comes to forgiveness? That is where the Lord’s Prayer, meets our Lord’s Passion. It was brought up at the very beginning of our Lent journey on Ash Wednesday when we were discussing the moments where Jesus specifically prays to God our Father. And here we find the words again from Luke chapter 23 verse 34 “And Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” If you are looking for a particular verse that speaks to the first part of the fifth petition of the Lord’s Prayer, where Jesus is asking for forgiveness for his own sin, you won’t find it. Jesus remains the sinless Son of God, the perfect lamb of sacrifice. He is like us in every way, except for sin. So the only example we find is that Jesus forgives his captors and those who put him through such excruciating physical and emotional pain, **literally as they are doing it.** Which shows us our example when it comes to this petition. If Jesus can forgive these men, who do unspeakable evil against him, how could we not forgive those who trespass against us?

Martin Luther puts the spotlight when it comes to this petition not on the sins of others, but solely on ourselves in the Small Catechism. “We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.” The only reference to others is in what we do for them, which is forgive them, and do good to them, even though it specifically makes reference to the fact that they have sinned against us.

This is the hardest thing we can do as Christians, because it’s contrary to everything we are taught in the world around us. If someone sins against you, you have every right to sin against them, you are justified in your actions against them in the eyes of others around you and who know the situation. It’s only fair. We love fair. We want fair. It’s fair for us to hit someone back, steal something back, and get even with those who do us wrong. It’s fair for us not to forgive someone and hold it against them, it teaches them a lesson, it’s really for their own good. We are drawn to fair because we always see our side of things and believe we are entitled or we deserve the good things that come to us in our life, completely ignoring that we may also be entitled or deserve the bad things that come from our own bad actions. The world wants fair, and fair would be that the sinless and perfect Son of God would go free, would not be whipped, beat, spat on, and hung on a cross to die. He has done nothing wrong, and the punishment of sin is death. So fair would mean that everyone who has sinned would receive the rightful payment of their wrongs. That would be fair. Fair would mean that someone who sins and willingly makes themselves defiled would have no business asking the Almighty and Perfect God for anything in prayer! Fair would mean that we would never receive anything good from God when all we’ve done is bad. Fair would mean that our place wouldn’t be in the presence of the Almighty and loving God, but that our place would be on the cross, and in pain, for all eternity because of the unforgiving attitude we have towards others.

We don’t want fair. Not really, not when we really think it through. Fair means Jesus doesn’t die, you do. So rather than focusing on fair, focus on forgiveness, and not the wonderful forgiveness you show to others and how amazing you are, that’s not the lesson to be learned from Jesus praying to God the Father on behalf of his persecutors. Focus on **your** forgiveness, you as the object of the forgiveness, not the subject. Not that you are doing the forgiving, but the first words of the petition. God, forgive me my trespasses. That’s where Luther puts all the focus, and it connects us to the Passion and to the cross, because that’s why Jesus is going through this hell on earth in the first place. He’s dying for your trespasses, not his own. He’s dying for your imperfection, not because you are a perfect and wonderful person. He’s dying for you, to forgive you, and save you. That’s how much he loves you. You don’t deserve his love, you don’t deserve his death and his pain for your mistakes, but that’s what you receive. It’s not fair at all, he gives everything to you, he suffers everything you deserve!

Could you honestly not forgive someone else for **anything** after you’ve been shown a love that deep? That amazing? What is our song as Christians? A song of equality? Fairness? Holding grudges and not forgiving? Never. We show forgiveness and love to others freely because of the gift of forgiveness given to us. It’s in the Lent hymn 430. What is our song? Our song is love unknown. “My Savior’s love to me, love to the **loveless** shown that they might **lovely be**. Oh who am I, that for my sake, my Lord should take frail flesh and die?” I have no answer to that question. We who are nothing are given everything. Praise the Lord through what you do, especially in the forgiveness you show to others. Meditate upon his love and forgiveness throughout this season, even as it comes to a close. God forgives you. God loves you. God sent His Son to die for you and in His Passion, as His body is wracked with pain and suffering Jesus prays for those who hurt him, that they would be forgiven. God bless and keep you in that amazing love and mercy.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.