

6 Hours

Pastor Ken

Week 2, February 25, 2024

³⁴ Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. (Luke 23-NIV)

He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. (Col 2-NIV)

World famous author Charles Dickens authored a book entitled, *Great Expectations*. Dickens wrote about a wealthy spinster named Miss Havisham whose wedding day turned into a nightmare. The love of her life was a no-show. He faked his love for her, only to defraud and steal from her.

The jilted lover-less was humiliated and heartbroken. Miss Havisham went on to experience a mental snap. Surprisingly and shockingly, Miss Havisham never took off her white wedding dress.

The injury that traumatized her took place at 8:40 am. Time stood still, literally for a traumatized, dumped and groomless bride wearing a wedding dress she would not remove. Time stood still.

She stopped all the clocks in her house at that precise moment. She was stuck in time and could not get out of it. Even if her clocks came to rest at 8:40, twice a day and so they registered correctly, she lived the rest of her life in past-tense pain.

Miss Havisham is not a figment of Dicken's imagination; we all know her all too well. At times all of us feel like her. We act like her. We are her! A traumatic or painful experience holds you hostage, and the ransom is your one and only life.

And to make it worse, we often slip into coping mechanisms that make the situation worse. Life entails a wide tapestry of painful and pleasurable experiences. Some are pleasant; some are sad; others are challenging.

How do we respond to difficult situations? Coping mechanisms are the ways we respond to difficult experiences. You can think of a coping mechanism as your emotional and behavioral toolbox. What happens when our responses to our painful experiences are destructive? What do we do if our responses to our problems become the problem? Here is a quick list, avoid these at all costs.

1. Substance abuse
2. Avoidance and denial
3. Self-harm
4. Negative self-talk
5. Emotional eating or binge eating
6. Isolation
7. Procrastination
8. Overworking
9. Aggression
10. Excessive screen time

If you want to grow in Christ, become healthy as a parent, spouse, employee, you have to take inventory and identify the ways you are self-sabotaging yourself **by wearing the same wedding dress every day**. Wedding dress like coping mechanisms, are visible to all.

Along with the biblical text, each week God will use creative art to make a point, to change a heart and to heal a hurt.

Now this change can only take place by allowing the Holy Spirit to shape you, as Heather Swinger next to me is shaping this piece of clay.

She knows what shape she has in mind for the final product. She has artistic skills to press, reshape and mold with each spin of the wheel and each decision by the artist. In the end she will have a beautiful decorative piece, available for public display. Made by her vision. Made by her hands. Just as God is making you into beautiful piece of clay, made in the image of Christ.

Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. (Is 64:8-NIV)

God wants to help you change wrongful patterns. This is where a relationship with Christ enters the picture. Because of his atoning death on the cross, you now possess the power and authority to remove sin, heal in your body and heal in your emotions.

Instead of being stuck in the past, (wearing the same wedding dress), or fearful and anxious about the future (because you have been jilted), you can live in the day. Win the day. Be forgiven of your sin in your day. Even today!

Jesus was crucified. As he died, he faced the ancient city of Jerusalem. The skin rips. The blood drips. Jesus forgives.

Then, the Roman executioner moved to the other two criminals and went through the same ritual.

The executioner laid the crossbeam behind the other criminals and tossed them to the ground quickly grasping an arm and pulling them backward.

As each stumbled and fell to the ground, each was carefully positioned for crucifixion. Each criminal gave unrelenting resistance to no avail. Words cursing Rome and life spewed from their mouths.

Suddenly the executioner probed the wrist to find a hollow spot. When he found it, the executioner took one of the square cut 5-inch iron nails from his pocket and positioned them against the spot, behind the lifeline. Then he raised the hammer as he went to work. Suddenly, slamming the nail into the beam with precision.

To the watching crowd, the sight was hard to stomach. Moans and groans filled the air. Constant and agonizing pain caused each person on his cross to move with agonizing pain.

Most of the crowd had their eyes on the criminal in the middle. A hand-painted Roman sign hung over Jesus. It said, **Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews**. Pilate used the sign to mock the Jews. God had a different purpose for the sign. Every passerby that day, could read Hebrew, Latin and Greek.

Jesus was the king for all people, and there is no language Jesus will not speak. Which leads me to an all-important question, “what language is Jesus speaking to YOU?”

The high priest had declared this middle one, to be a fake Messiah. Jesus was executed because he announced the destruction of the temple and then declared he had the ability to rebuild it in 3 days. This was blasphemy to the religious elite. To the Sanhedrin. The ruling and religious council for the Jewish people. The Jewish supreme court declared Jesus guilty of blasphemy and treason.

This was outlandish. This was outlawed. This was out-of-bounds.

Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” (John 2:19-NIV)

To a stranger, Jesus looked like the other criminals being crucified that day.
Like the others his head bobbed.

Like the others groans of pain spewed from his lips.

Like the others blood dripped from any one of 3 wounds punctured by a
5-inch iron spike.

Like the others Jesus moved in and out of consciousness and he
could be heard **mumbling** from time to time.

Most noted, like the others, all the weight of Jesus body hung on 3 nails at his wrist and
feet.

For six hours, Jesus hung on the cross. It was almost impossible to breathe. He had to
push Himself upward on the lone spike that held his feet, then gasp for air. With every moment,
knife-like pain shot through His body. Every muscle was twisted into painful cramps. His
shoulders slipped out of their sockets as they carried the weight of His body. Sweat poured
down His lacerated back. Most people would curse, swear or slip into insanity or a coma. Jesus
held His sufferings inside, to Himself.

The pain in Jesus' wrists was beyond bearing. The pectoral muscles at the sides of Jesus
chest would often spasm into a state of momentary paralysis.

Seconds later, an involuntary panic attack would be experienced as Jesus attempted to
draw air into his lungs. Now, this created a problem, Jesus was unable to exhale. Then slowly
raising himself on his bleeding feet, with all the weight of the body now localized into the legs
and feet, Jesus' head rose above the sign and his shoulders were now level with his hands,
Jesus would quickly grasp for air.

Like a person who had held their breath for a long time beyond comfort, Jesus exhaled,
then gasping for all the air he could get. Jesus breathed rapidly for a few moments.

This process was repeated, again and again, as the sun began to slip behind the clouds.
Then minutes would pass. Then more gasping for air. And soon more clouds rolled in with a
dark blue ominous storm like look.

Then minutes would pass. And then more gasping for air. All this was happening while
Jesus was being tortured with insults, mockery, and sarcasm. Likely for hours.

Those who passed by hurled insults at him. (Matt 27:39-NIV)

*In the same way the chief priests, teachers of the law and elders mocked him. (Matt
27:41-NIV)*

*In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.
(Matt 27:44-NIV)*

So close to the cross, yet so far from the blood as Max Lucado says. So close to the cross, yet so far from Christ.

For hours criminals, the religious elite and even passerby's, got in on the act as they launched verbal torts that landed on Golgotha's bow. On Golgotha's criminals. On Golgotha's hill of execution.

Once upon a time, the creator of the universe was **tormented**, *you who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in 3 days, save yourself.*

Once upon a time, a baby once born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, now hanging on a cross is mocked, *he saved others, but he can't save himself.*

Once upon a time, the worker of miracles, the savior of souls, and the lover of sinners and outcasts is being jeered, *as they offered him wine vinegar, they said, if you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.!*

One of the women in the crowd turned to her husband, and announced, this is too hard to watch, let's go home. Mary is now being held closely by the disciple John, she wept and cried.

With each insult, mockery or jeer the sky grew darker. With each insult, mockery or jeer the Azure blue sky deepened to Robins egg blue sky. With each insult, mockery or jeer, Robin's egg blue sky became midnight blue sky. The hue was now disappearing from the blue in the sky.

This all took place, as if each insult was having an effect on nature.

And they do. Every time you show disgust, dissatisfaction, or disdain about what God is doing in your life or others, it has an impact on your nature.

When you believe lies about other Christians or gossip, effecting your relationship to the point you withdraw or act grouchy toward them, **the sky in your soul grows darker.**

When you hold grudges, when you should be extending grace, **the sky in your soul grows darker.**

When you are small and petty in how you treat others, God and even yourself, **the sky in your soul grows darker.**

Since Jesus could not bear the thought of eternity without you, he chose 6 hours. He chose the insults. He accepts the mockery. He did not respond to the jeers.

As the hours pass, those in crowd no longer focus on the criminals, now they focus on the climate. They no longer ask what Jesus did that was so bad to deserve death, they are now making plans to get home before the storm breaks.

Jesus is not concerned about the storm. He had come for this moment. To rid humanity of sins storm, that raged in the soul of every human.

As Jesus was hanging on the cross, He knew the **source** of the sins He was dying for was YOU!

Jesus knew the source of the storm and the source of the sins, it was YOU and ME. There was no sound of thunder. There was no lightning in the sky. The sky darkened until the sun could be stared at by the human eye, just as the heart is darkened by sin, and is stared at by each of us and others daily.

Some are now afraid of the storm that has seemingly settled over Golgotha as if by a providential hand. Heaven's destruction was about to be poured out on 3 criminals. And those who know God's word, are aware that is exactly what God was about to do.

Darkness lasted the rest of the day.

But, before heaven opened its mouth, Jesus opened his.

(34) But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23)

Forgiveness is God at His best when man is at his worst. What motivated Jesus to break the afternoon silence with such words of grace? Word of mercy? Words of forgiveness?

To really appreciate what Jesus said, we have to look at what was going on around Him at the moment. Few things in life hurt as badly as words that are intended to wound. Words that dripped with sarcasm. Words that pierced with hatred. **Words that were intended to emotionally and physically leave the recipient destroyed.**

The background for Jesus words of forgiveness and mercy, was other's words of sarcasm, hatred, and mockery. Three groups of people surrounded the Savior that day and poured out their devilish dialogue. Their miserable mockery. Their hellish hatred.
From the onlookers...

(29) Those who passed by hurled insults at Him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, (30) come down from the cross and save yourself." (Mark 15)

From the religious leaders...

(35) The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at Him. They said, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." (Luke 23)

From the soldiers...

(36) The soldiers came up and mocked Him. They offered Him wine vinegar (37) and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." (Luke 23)

Some years later Peter is writing to believers who are facing persecution. He takes his audience back to that dreadful day in Jerusalem and gives them some insight as to how to handle words that wound in 1 Peter 2:23, (23) When they hurled insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats.

If you are mocking. Stop it! If you are criticizing. Stop it!

If you are gossiping. Stop it! If you are wounding with words. Stop it!

There is no way I would have responded that way. If I were Jesus, I might have flexed a bicep of spiritual power.

(1) Hey friend, let me tell you a few things about your life. As he reads your mail publicly.

(2) By the way guys, I am coming back in resurrection. I will be the one on the white horse, and I'll be looking for you." No, He graciously carries the insults.

Jesus love for you does not depend on what you do for Him. (Luke 23:40-43-NIV)

Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly. (24) He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2)

Listen friend, those are the most liberating words in the world. He took our sins and carried them on the tree. And the gospel of Mark provides a snapshot of what that looks like. *They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, ³⁴ who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise." (Mark 10-NIV)*

Let me say it again: Jesus love for you does not depend on what you do for Him. (Luke 23:40-43-NIV)

I love the reminder that when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, we did not know what we were doing. And Jesus did not then, and does not now, hold that against us. Jesus' words, *for they do not know what they are doing*, are true at the cross and true in Kansas.

In your Christian faith, you are the benefactor of divine benefits. These are benefits you receive when you receive Christ. When you interview for a job or company you will often ask about the benefits. What are the benefits that come along with this employment? Or you are told in the interview what the benefits are.

You are not unspiritual, nor do you lack faith, when you ask about the benefits of employment. Those benefits impact you, your spouse, your family, and your future. Your health. Maybe even your personal development, including even education.

Is there health insurance? What does vacation and time off look like? Is there a matching fund retirement plan? When you join up with Jesus Christ through faith in his atoning death and resurrection, there are many Christians, even some sitting here and watching online, you are not aware of the benefits available to you because Jesus hung on the cross for 6 hours.

Does that make sense? Psalm 103:1, bless the Lord Oh, my soul and all that is within me, if you forget to pray before the meal, and someone calls you out, here is a safety net verse...Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me. Lol.

Praise the Lord, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits— (don't forget)

The King David the sweet singer of Israel, lists 5 benefits. I want to show you just a couple. Forgiveness. Healing. Deliverance. Underline in your notes in verse 3 and 4, forgives, healing and redeems.

³ *who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,*
⁴ *who redeems your life from the pit. (Psalm 103-IV)*

Ok, under the category of forgiveness, let me give you a glimpse of the forgiveness you receive from Christ's atoning death. The benefits you receive from forgiveness. Let me summarize it this way using 3 descriptive words: removes, remembers no more and finally releases.

*Divine forgiveness **removes** our sins. (Col 2:13-14)*
*Divine forgiveness **remembers** our sins no more. (Is 43:25)*
*Divine forgiveness **releases** us from our sins (debts). (Matt 18:35)*

David is telling his soul; (praise the Lord, oh, my soul), you need to be reminded of the benefits you receive from knowing God. Then David names the benefits.

Divine forgiveness removes our sins. (Col 2)

You receive divine forgiveness when you come into a relationship with Jesus Christ. He removes our transgressions. How does he do that? Ok, look at Colossians 2

He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. (Col 2-NIV)

(1) Jesus cancels the charges. (2) Jesus takes away the sins. (3) Jesus nails them to the cross.

Jesus cancels the charges against us. With every sin, a charge is brought against the sin. Every time you violate the law while driving, if the police stop you, they can bring a charge against every violation.

You drove too fast. Violation with a charge.

You drove recklessly. Violation with a charge.

You drove on a suspended driver's license. Violation with a charge.

You drove with dark tinted glass beyond the legal limit. Say it with me, "violation with a charge.

You drove with too many people in the car, "violation with a charge."

You drove with your exhaust pipe dragging on the ground sending sparks everywhere, say it with me, violation with a charge.

The first thing to know about your sins, they are not being passed over, looked over, and just brushed off. God in eternity is keeping a record. And unless you want to deal with a holy God and the consequences of those sins, you need to ...have Jesus take the sins away.

That is the next step. Have Jesus take the sins away.

Jesus takes the sins away. In the Old Testament this was done a couple ways. For sins you committed individually, you offer a sacrifice to God. Read Numbers 15 and you discover there were penalties for intentional and unintentional sins. And these sins have varying ranges of consequences depending on the degree of the sin. (Numbers 15:32-36) When the nations sins as a whole; the whole nation offers a sacrifice to God. Passover and a scape goat are offered. Ok, let me talk about these.

Passover-protection from evil and sin when blood is used to cover the guilty party.

Scapegoat: a goat sent into the wilderness after the Jewish chief priest had symbolically laid the sins of the people upon it (Lev. 16). This is connected to the day of atonement.

He shall take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the doorway of the tent of meeting. Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat. Then Aaron shall offer the goat on which the lot for the Lord fell, and make it a sin offering. (Lev 16)

*The next day he *saw Jesus coming to him and *said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)*

Jesus nails them to the cross.

God brought you alive—right along with Christ! Think about it! All sins forgiven, the slate wiped clean, that old arrest warrant canceled and nailed to Christ's cross. He stripped all the spiritual tyrants in the universe of their sham authority at the Cross and marched them naked through the streets. (Col 2-MSG)

REMEMBERS no more:

RELEASES:

The only way a holy God can have a relationship with you is to forgive your sins.

*¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed death** and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (2 Tim 1:10-NIV)*

Easter destroyed death because of Jesus' resurrection.

It would be spiritual malpractice if I failed to instruct you not only about how Christ's atoning death has destroyed death and offers you eternal life, **but what happens if you chose to reject Christ.** ² *Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. (Dan 12:2-NIV)*

If you are not sure if you have done this, all you have to do is *receive* and *believe....to all who have **received** Him, to those who **believed** in His name He has given the right to become children of God. (John 1:12-NIV)*

First, receive. Receive Christ as your savior. Receive forgiveness of sins. Receive the Holy Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing your future. **Second, believe.** Believe that God loves you. Believe that no sin is too much for God to forgive. Believe that no person is too late to have eternal life.

Believe that you are valuable to God's plan. Believe that God sent His best in His son Jesus to die for you. Paul reminds us that we all are in the same boat when it comes to our need for salvation. And it is because of Jesus' death that we can all have eternal life. The sting of death is gone, life is being offered. **Let me invite you to use these words as a prayer to affirm your faith; and to have your sins atone for.**

Father,

My firm decision is to work from this focused center: One man died for everyone. That puts everyone in the same boat. You included me in Jesus' death, so that I could be included in His life.

A resurrection life, a far better life than I could ever live on my own. So, today I claim Christ's forgiveness of sins by believing and receiving.

I receive Christ as my savior. I receive forgiveness of my sins. I receive the Holy Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing my future.

I believe that God loves me. I also believe that no sin is too much for God to forgive. I believe that no person is too late to receive eternal life. Today, I claim Christ's forgiveness to cover my pile of sins and in exchange I am born again.

In Jesus Name. Amen.