

# The 64th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Tuesday, July 13, 2010

## Bible Study Essay 3: One People Forgiven through Christ to Forgive *in the Family*

This “Bible Study Essay” is the third of five essays that Ted Kober prepared for the 64th Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. It was originally presented on Tuesday, July 13, 2010. The theme of the convention was “One People—Forgiven.”

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Note that each Bible study essay provides discussion questions in the middle of the document. In the original convention, only 5 minutes was provided for this discussion because of time constraints. However, when used in other settings, we recommended that much more time be allowed for discussion of these questions.

*Presented by Ted Kober*

Brothers and sisters, one people forgiven through Christ to forgive in the family,

Oh, blest the house, whate'er befall,  
Where Jesus Christ is all in all!  
A home that is not wholly His—  
How sad and poor and dark it is!

Oh, blest that house; it prospers well.  
In peace and joy the parents dwell,  
And in their children's lives is shown  
How richly God can bless His own.<sup>1</sup>

### Proclaiming God's Forgiveness in the Family

In confirmation instruction, I remember my pastor teaching that when we became parents, we needed to absolve our children. But I didn't experience that growing up, and no one ever showed me how to do it with my wife and son. We had shared personal forgiveness with another, but I had never announced God's forgiveness specifically, personally, and directly. As a parent, I failed to proclaim God's forgiveness to my son until one day, when he was a junior in high school, we ended up in a terrible fight.

Jesus, however, proclaims forgiveness specifically, personally, and directly.

Luke reports on a specific event in Jesus' ministry when he was invited to eat with a Pharisee named Simon. While reclining at the table, a woman entered

the house uninvited, washed Jesus' feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, and anointed them with oil. Simon was repulsed that she would dare do this, and in his mind he judged Jesus for allowing it. Our text today from Luke 7:40-48 describes Jesus' response:

And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.”

“A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.” Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”<sup>2</sup>

### Specifically, Directly, Personally

Before Jesus said to her “Your sins are forgiven,” did

this woman know that she was forgiven? She must have. According to Jesus' words about her, she was responding in love because she was forgiven much. Besides that, Jesus was still looking at her when he told Simon, "Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven." She knew about the forgiveness of her sins.

But for Jesus, the woman just knowing about her forgiveness was not enough. In verse 48, Jesus declares directly to her, "Your sins are forgiven." He proclaimed forgiveness to her specifically, directly, and personally.

You and I are to forgive others as Christ forgives us. If Jesus announces forgiveness so specifically, so directly, and so personally, so shouldn't his followers?

Sadly, those with whom we often neglect to share God's forgiveness are our own family members—parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters. We often make the unholy assumption that because we are family, we don't need to proclaim God's forgiveness. We take it for granted that we are forgiven, right?

This can lead us to deal with sin in less than gracious ways. Let's see how a father confronts his teenage son about misuse of the computer.

[Video: Father & Son 1<sup>3</sup>]

## A Father Confronts His Son . . .

Well, the father certainly let his son know what was right and wrong, didn't he? Take four minutes in your small groups to discuss the following questions:

- 1) What were the father's godly desires?
- 2) How did the father's godly desires turn into sinful demands?
- 3) If you were the parent in this situation, what would be your next step? What if you were the teenager? Consider the following verses:

- Psalm 32:3-5
- Proverbs 28:13
- James 5:16

The father is responsible for disciplining his son, and clearly the son has been involved in sinful behavior. At a minimum, the son has broken the Fourth Commandment, the Sixth, the Eighth, and the Tenth. The Bible teaches that authority has been instituted by God, and when the son resists correction, he is resisting God. Therefore, he

also sinned against the First Commandment.

So what's the issue? Can we be right on our position but sin in the way we deal with others? Can we be about God's business but still sin? Where is the father's fruit of the spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? Paul writes, "Against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:23a-24).

Christians attempting to live out their vocations can and do fail to live as God's children, especially in the heat of the moment. When we do, God gives us the method for working through these times: confession and forgiveness.

In the next scene, we'll watch as the father approaches his son a second time. You should have received a copy of the pamphlet *Announcing God's Grace*.<sup>4</sup> I encourage you to keep this handy, so that you can see how it can be used within the family.

[Video: Father & Son 2<sup>5</sup>]

Take a few minutes to discuss the next three questions in your small group.

- 1) How did the father model reconciliation, and what impact did it have on his son?
- 2) The father used the pamphlet, *Announcing God's Grace*. Such forms are neither required nor forbidden by Scripture. How can using this pamphlet be beneficial? How might such a form become a disadvantage?
- 3) Why is it important to proclaim God's forgiveness in addition to offering personal forgiveness?

## "God Forgives You, and So Do I"

I mentioned earlier today that I did not learn to proclaim God's forgiveness to my son until he was a teenager.<sup>6</sup> Much like the scenes we just watched, I lost my temper and my son and I ended up yelling at each other. It was awful. When we were too tired to argue, we sat down and I quietly thought, "Now, as a Christian father, how should I have handled this?" In my mind, I tried to justify my actions, but in my gut, I knew that I was wrong. I needed help for what needed to happen next.

Using our hymnals, we did something we had never done in our home before. We adapted the order of

Private Absolution for our home, something similar to the form you have in front of you. Since not one of us is a pastor, we had to change some of the language. Yet it guided us in our confessions, keeping us from denial and blame-shifting. Moreover, it helped us share God's forgiveness and personal forgiveness with one another.

The next year there was another incident in our home. Sometimes when you're raising a teenager, these things just happen. But no one lost their temper this time, and when I asked my son how he wanted to handle the situation, he said, "Dad, can we go through that order of confession and forgiveness?" My eyes filled with tears as I realized just how much my son wanted to hear those words, "God forgives you for Jesus' sake, and so do I."

Once again, we recognize that God involves himself in our lives through his Word of absolution. God calls us to serve as messengers of his grace when we confess our sins to one another and forgive one another, especially in vocations within our own family.

What a privilege we have! Not just to offer words of personal forgiveness, but to share the love of Christ with those we love the most!

## Reconciliation Is Urgent Business!

A reconciliation pastor visited a congregation to discuss how he might help them work through their conflicts.<sup>7</sup> He was only with them two hours, but he took time to share God's forgiveness with them. He reminded them how important it is to share this gift with others, especially within our families. The church ended up not using his services. But some months later, he learned that one of the women who attended that meeting was moved to call her sister. They had been bitter enemies for more than 50 years.

It began when they were girls and shared a bed. They began to kick each other and it got out of control. They both were badly bruised and hurt, but their relationship was damaged the most. This woman called her sister and they reconciled through confession and forgiveness after a half century of bitterness. The next week, this woman went to the hospital for surgery and died. The sister came to the funeral and, with tears, thanked the pastor for the teaching in his church that prompted their reconciliation. The pastor didn't even know that his member had a sister, let alone that they had reconciled.

Is there someone in your family with whom you are not

reconciled? Sharing God's forgiveness is urgent business. None of us knows how much time we have to give the gift we have been given. We are not responsible for how others respond to us, but we are called to do what Paul writes in Romans 12:18: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."

Fellow beggars, have you at times failed to forgive someone in your family? God knows each time. But he chooses not to remember as he forgives. To you and me he says, "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34b). He comes today to declare specifically, personally, and directly, "You are forgiven."

We pray.

O dearest Jesus, you are so ready to forgive and shower us with your love. We are beggars and have nothing to bring, but we cling to your cross and ask for your strength to forgive those who hurt us, especially in our own families. Forgive us for failing to forgive as you have forgiven us. Compel us by your love to reach out and reconcile with family and friends. Help us recognize the opportunities to share your forgiveness specifically, directly, and personally, as you do for us. We pray this in your holy name. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Christoph Carl Ludwig von Pfeil, 1712-84; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-78; "Oh, Blest the House," public domain.

<sup>2</sup> All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>3</sup> *Responding to Sexual Temptation in a High Tech Society* DVD (Billings, MT: Ambassadors of Reconciliation, 2008), "Father & Son 1." Used by permission.

<sup>4</sup> Ambassadors of Reconciliation, *Announcing God's Grace* (Billings, MT: Ambassadors of Reconciliation, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> *Responding to Sexual Temptation in a High Tech Society* DVD (Billings, MT: Ambassadors of Reconciliation, 2008), "Father & Son 2." Used by permission.

<sup>6</sup> I have my family's permission to share these incidents without disclosing specifics of my son's sins.

<sup>7</sup> True story; certain facts changed to protect confidences.