

“Who Wants a Do-Over?”

Text: Luke 1:57-66

December 21, 2008

Park Boulevard Presbyterian Church (www.pbpc.org)

Oakland, California

Rev. Chris Gelini

Read Luke 1:57-66 [Jasmine Griggs]

PRAY!

Story of two square and do over!

In our reading this morning, Zachariah had been chosen by God to be a part of something bigger than a game. He was chosen to be part of God’s plan of salvation for the world by being the father of John the Baptist, who would prepare the people for the coming of the Lord.

- Yet, he had not believed the angel of the Lord’s words that his wife Elizabeth would bear a son in her old age.
- God disciplined Zachariah for not believing by making him mute until his son was born.
- The nine months of silence gave Zachariah the time he needed to get right with God and to be prepared for the task before him. Zachariah, you could say, wanted a “do over”; a second chance.

God forgave Zachariah and gave him a second chance to demonstrate his faith in God when the baby, John, was born.

- Part of the promise to Zachariah concerning his son was that he was to name him John.
- Family lines and family names were important to the Jews. The people naturally assumed that the child would receive Zachariah’s name or at least a family name.
- Elizabeth gives birth to a baby son just as the angel of the Lord said. Now the “do over” would come. Zachariah was given a second chance with the naming of his son. Would he name him John as the angel said? He does!
- Zachariah names his son John and with that, he could speak again. He gives praise to God. God had given him a second chance.

This morning concludes our series on “Great Gifts for Christmas”. Our theme verse is John 3:16, *“For God so loved the world that he gave...”* God is a “Giver” and the Christmas season is the celebration of the greatest gift God ever gave to humanity, the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And it was Jesus who said, “It is better to give than to receive.” We are called to be givers as well. We’ve looked at a number of Great Gifts for Christmas:

- The gift of silence

- The gift of possibilities
- The gift of blessing
- And this week we're looking at the gift of "do overs", the gift of second chances. What the Bible calls forgiveness.

Everyone here has hurt others, and other people have hurt us. We all need the gift of forgiveness in life. We all need a second chance. Jesus came into the world to forgive you. He died on the cross for the sins of the world and through Jesus Christ God personally forgives you.

- Ephesians 4:32 tells us, "...forgive each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Forgiven people should be forgiving of others.

The disciple Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven."

- The parable of the unforgiving debtor
- Because God has forgiven all our sins, we should not withhold forgiveness from others. As we realize how completely Christ has forgiven us, it should produce in us an attitude of forgiveness toward others. When we don't forgive others, we are setting ourselves above Christ's law of love.
- God gives us second, third, fourth, etc... chances. Who needs a second chance in your life?

WHAT IS BIBLICAL FORGIVENESS?

1. Biblical forgiveness is unconditional.

- A. We don't earn it; we don't deserve it; we can't bargain for it. Forgiveness is not based on a promise to never do it again. We offer forgiveness to somebody, whether that person asks for it or not.
- John 3:17, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world (to forgive the world)." God initiates forgiveness to all people.
- B. When somebody says, "I will forgive you if..." that's not forgiveness; that's bargaining. Luke 23:34, when Jesus stretched out his hands on the cross and said, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing", he took the initiative, not waiting for us to first clean up our lives.
- C. To whom do you need to give unconditional forgiveness?

2. Biblical forgiveness doesn't minimize the offense.

- A. It actually cheapens forgiveness when somebody comes and asks for your forgiveness and you say, "It's no big deal. It really didn't hurt. It's okay. It didn't really bother me." If it wasn't a big deal, you wouldn't need forgiveness, and you wouldn't need to offer it. If it really requires forgiveness, then you should not minimize it when somebody asks you for forgiveness.

1. James 5:16, "...confess your sins to each other..."

- B. Asking for forgiveness takes courage. Giving it takes mercy.
 Has someone tried to ask you for forgiveness and you minimized it?
 People need to hear the words of grace, "I forgive you."

3. Biblical forgiveness doesn't mean the relationship resumes without changes.

- A. The Bible teaches three things that are essential to resume a relationship that has been broken: repentance, restitution, and rebuilding trust.
1. You have to be genuinely repentant and truly saddened about what you did. That's not just saying a quick, "I'm sorry." It means heartfully and meaningfully saying, "I was wrong. Please forgive me."
 - 2 Corinthians 7:10, "*Godly sorrow brings repentance ...*"
 - Marriage
 2. Sometimes forgiveness should be accompanied with some sort of physical or material restitution. If I came over to your house and burned it down, it wouldn't be enough for me to say, "Oops! I'm sorry." I'd need to assume that debt of rebuilding your home, because I destroyed your house.
 - Numbers 5:5-7, "*The Lord said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites: Any man or woman who wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the Lord is guilty and must confess the sin they have committed. They must make full restitution for the wrong they have done ...'*"
 3. When it comes to rebuilding trust, it may take a long, long time. Forgiveness is instant, but trust is something that's only rebuilt over a period of time. It must be re-earned.
 - Colossians 4:10, "*My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him, if he comes to you, welcome him.)*" Mark had deserted Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. On the second missionary journey, Paul refused to take Mark, but Barnabas separated from Paul and took Mark with him on a mission to Cyprus. Ultimately, Mark proved himself to Paul, indicated by his presence with Paul during Paul's first Roman imprisonment and by Paul's request here for Timothy to bring Mark with him to Rome. Trust was restored.

Is there a relationship in your life that has been broken? What is needed to resume the relationship is repentance, restitution and rebuilding trust.

4. Biblical forgiveness isn't forgetting what's happened.

- A. You've heard this phrase over and over: forgive and forget, forgive and forget. There's only one problem with it – it's really difficult to forget a hurt that's been in your life. It's like when you go on a diet; you think about food all the time. You think about it more than when you're not on a diet. The only way you can forget something is to actually refocus on something else.

- B. And that is focusing on how God takes the bad and works it out
“for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose ...” Romans 8:28.
1. Joseph and his brothers, Genesis 50:20, *“You intended to harm me but God intended it for good, to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”*
- C. Who has hurt you so badly that you just can’t forget what they did to you?
Refocus on God, and see how God takes that wrong and works it out for good.

Forgiveness is a gift from God.

1. Jesus came to earth to forgive you.
2. Jesus made forgiveness the cornerstone of His disciples’ relationship with God.
3. That’s why He taught them to pray, *“Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us.”* God has forgiven our sins; we must now forgive those who have wronged us.
4. To remain unforgiving shows we have not understood that we deeply need to be forgiven.
5. Think of some people who have wronged you. Have you forgiven them? How will God deal with you, if He treats you as you treat others?

Zachariah experienced the power of God’s forgiveness in his life. He received a second chance. May God give you mercy in your relationships to give the gift of forgiveness this Christmas season.

PRAY!