

Session Four - CROSSROADS: The Way of Forgiveness April 3rd - Erik Jespersen

Reflect back

- What stories can we share experiences about meeting God in our “wastelands.”
- What aspect of talk’s talk spoke most to us? What did we learn?

Review the teaching

Matt 18v21-35.

What is Jesus saying about the debt cancelling of the cross? There is a burden of living with debt. Even “affordable debt” (ie mortgage) can be weighty. We can lose joy and life. Erik shared an example of a business owner selling their business to remove the burden of debt (ie sleepless nights, etc.)

Last year The Lighthouse helped folk discharge £100k of debt through Debt Relief Orders. In 2015 - Croatian Govt wiped debt off for poorest 60,000 citizens. In 2005 - the world’s 18 poorest countries had £30bn debt written off. In 1953 the London Debt Agreement wiped the debt for Germany after WW2.

What is our biggest debt? It has been written off by Jesus on the cross. Forgiveness isn’t forget it, get over it, ignore it or move on. It is a transaction where the debt is cancelled. We owe allegiance to God: when we distrust him, we owe trust; when we reject God, we owe love and respect. Divine forgiveness is costly.

- Eph 1v7 (Phillips) *It is through the Son, at the cost of his own blood, that we are redeemed, freely forgiven through that full and generous grace which has overflowed into our lives and opened our eyes to the truth.*
- 2 Cor 5v21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
- 2 Cor 8v9 *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

We owe more than we can ever manage but in one act we’re liberated. This is the good news of the cross.

As we walk in the way of the cross we need to cancel the debts of others: when insulted we’re owed honour, when betrayed we’re owed trust, when lied to we’re owed honesty. In our cancel culture we want to write the person off but we need to cancel the debt not the person. BUT, forgiveness doesn’t mean we need to stay in relationship - a business might write off a bad debt but they might not trade with them again. (Ed. Likewise, an abused person can forgive the abuser but not stay with the abuser. Safety first).

Erik’s relationship with his father was poor, Dad showed no love nor encouragement. After time, Erik learned that by forgiving him Erik was the one who was freed from bitterness and resentment.

Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and hoping the other person will get sick. Unforgiveness can lead to damaging chemicals affecting our body. Prolonged resentment can give rise to Post Traumatic Embitterment Disorder. Unforgiveness is a key cause of mental health disorders. Forgiveness is a hallmark of Christianity.

True forgiveness leads to hearts set free. And we need to forgive ourselves too! We know our mistakes, our debts to others. We make conscious decisions we now regret. Apply the debt cancelling work of the cross.

Realise the value

- Spend time considering debts we owe to God or others. How can we process forgiveness?
- Consider debts someone owes me - what action should we take?
- How do we forgive ourselves?
- Do we need to forgive God? (Unanswered prayer, difficult circumstances)
- How do we as a Collective help one another develop the debt cancelling work of the cross in our lives?