

WHEN LIFE DISAPPOINTS: Accepting God's Lavish Generosity!

Scripture used: Luke 23:39-43 (NLT)

OVERVIEW

The big question in this sermon series is "How do I live and grow through disappointment?" This week's message continues with the theme of receiving God's gift of forgiveness -- and working thru the unforgiveness we might still have in our hearts towards ourselves. His forgiveness toward everyone around Him - even his tormentors - while on the cross, overwhelmed one of the other prisoners, who instantly accepted Christ as Lord, and asked him to remember him. Jesus replied, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43) That prisoner accepted Jesus' gift of lavish generosity, and God wants each of us to turn to Him in a similar fashion, asking for forgiveness and grace.

KEY POINTS

1. **Forgiveness enables growth.** Last week we learned the truth about forgiveness. Pastor Hurmon gave us a different definition to carry forward in our lives: "the letting go of a grievance (including feelings of bitterness, resentment and vengeance) against another or myself." Without this kind of Christian forgiveness, we cannot grow. And we are often our own harshest judges.
2. **Forgiveness encompasses three distinct areas.**
 - a. Learning to forgive others.
 - b. Learning to forgive ourselves.
 - c. Accepting forgiveness from a radical and generous God.
3. **Forgive to HEAL**
 - H - Hold and review the painful experience**
 - Be clear about what happened.
 - Be clear about your feelings.
 - Be clear about the aspect for which I am responsible, and the ones I am NOT.
 - Be prepared to share with 1 or 2 people I trust.
 - E - Examine with empathy**
 - We are "in process", with God shaping us throughout our lives, mistakes and all.
 - Psalm 103:14: "He knows how we are formed; He remembers that we are dust."
 - A - Adjust your perspective**
 - See God in the face of Jesus.
 - Acknowledge my need for God's grace (lavish generosity, unmerited favor)
 - God died for us because he decided we were worth it!
 - If God decided we are worth forgiving, who are we to judge ourselves?
 - L - Let it go!**
 - Accept God's lavish gift of generosity. We are all "in process" and deserve forgiveness.
 - Apply these lessons now and in the future

DISCUSSION

1. **HEAR** - Both prisoners crucified with Jesus scorned Him at first. (Matthew 27:44) But one prisoner converted after seeing the compassion that Jesus expressed. The Lord is known by His forgiveness!
2. **UNDERSTAND & DO** - Each of us struggles with grace. We feel as if we do not deserve the forgiveness offered up by Jesus' sacrifice. Identify one area of your life where you need to HEAL and forgive yourself. Walk through the steps outlined above: hold, examine, adjust, and let go!
3. **PRAYER** - We continue our season of prayer and fasting that will extend until Easter. Pastor Hurmon has asked all of our Life Groups to take time *together* to "pray for our 7" from the prayer cards that were distributed early on in this series -- and to regularly report and celebrate what God does in response.

This Week's Community Prayer Emphasis:

1. for God to guide NBCC to the right home for our first campus.
2. for God to provide for those searching for affordable housing/rent.