

**Letting Go Enough to Forgive**  
**Mark 11:20-25**  
**A sermon by Brenda Baker**  
**March 1, 2009**

I know someone who uses a book called The Language of Letting Go for their daily meditations. These various meditations integrate scripture passages with building self-esteem; something that can help many people in beginning their day. For me, I am finding that I have needed to let go in different ways throughout my life.

And yes, there is certainly the letting go of childish things as we journey through our various developmental stages of life. There are times when I know I have let go of some childish ways far too quickly; perhaps that is one of the reasons that drew me toward teaching young children for so many years.

And then there is the letting go in the sense of freeing oneself; not being so "up tight". In the '70s letting go was often confused with "let your hair hang down" and party; "letting it all hang out", "do your own thing", and a myriad of other popular phrases at the time which for me was not so freeing. I was a "go-by-the-book" kind of a girl. And I certainly wasn't free to let go at that point in my life.

And of course, there is always the parental sense of letting go of one's children. Let them go and let them grow. As parents what our heads and what our hearts tell us are often times different things; not to mention what we find surfacing through our actions and our words. (And how many of us have found ourselves breaking our solemn vows that we made earlier in our lives that we would never say/do **that** to our children if we ever became parents? Sometimes we regret the vow, and sometimes we regret the words/deeds; sometimes we now have more insight than when we made those vows. But letting go is a part of letting them grow, as difficult as it may be.

For me, letting go has also taken on another meaning. This meaning deals with the topic of forgiveness. Many have heard the phrase "forgive and forget". I would offer as much on the importance of remembering as I would on the importance of forgiving. There is such a significance in remembering both the good and the bad and both play an important role in the act and the choice of forgiveness. And forgiveness is; indeed, an act of letting go.

Throughout the New Testament there are numerous examples of Jesus forgiving people for their sin, but before that step is taken; someone, whether it is Jesus, a third party or the person themselves tells the wrong that has been done. We remember, not to maintain the burden but to not repeat it. Jesus reminds his disciples at the Last Supper, with the symbols of the bread and the wine, "Do this in remembrance of me".

Remembering is important. We spend time with family and friends remembering times past. We sit around the table and in family rooms to tell stories. People are now into doing scrap-booking and journaling which is a wonderful way to share family histories. And in this age of fast technology, while it can be used as a great tool for our children and families in sharing these histories, it is important to still share these stories, person-to-person; for it is in the contact and the time together which also becomes a part of the family history in the making which will be a significant memory to share in the future.

Yet we all realize that remembering is not always easy; rather it can be quite painful. And there are times when we just would rather forget some things altogether. I have learned that we remember the painful things when we are ready to remember and to deal with them. Remembering is part of the process on the path to forgiveness. The painful journey always seems so much longer than the memories that are filled with joyful events; and yet, these are the ones from which we tend to grow the most if we can just "hang in there" through the process. And as we come to the point in the journey where we are ready to decide to "let go" of this pain enough to forgive then; indeed, we truly are proclaiming something wonderful. This is when we are truly understanding God's love and sharing God's love for ourselves and for others. And that is why we're here. It's not easy. It's not always meant to be easy, but it is in the remembering that we can truly forgive and love.

Now our scripture passage today reminds us that, "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses." Now, it is my hope that we forgive not just because we seek forgiveness from God; however, I do understand that sometimes it does take motivation for us to accomplish difficult tasks. And did you notice the key word in this verse? The key word in this verse is **anyone**. If you have anything against anyone you are to forgive them; not just those who can do something for you; not just if they ask you for your forgiveness; if you have anything against anyone then, in prayer, you are to forgive them. I would offer that we would continue our prayer, not just within ourselves, but into our action, as well. That is, we carry out our forgiveness and put it into practice.

And so it is, on this first Sunday of this Lenten season, that offer to each of us a challenge. I offer that we enter these next few weeks in a season of prayer. I would suggest that as we go through each day, we spend just a bit more time prayerfully seeking out, intentionally, what it is, or who it is, in our lives that we need to remember and then being in a prayerful mode of reconciliation and forgiveness ~ for ourselves, for others, and for God.

And as we begin to let go, and forgive, we can begin to allow ourselves the opportunity and the grace of fellowship, and communion, and love, not only for those around us; but also the fullness of fellowship, and communion, and love and grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ. And so it is with the love of God, and the grace of His Son, Jesus the Christ, along with the fellowship of the Holy Spirit that we will remember and celebrate Holy Communion this day.

**Benediction**

May God's forgiveness help us to forgive others,  
May God's mercy inspire us to be merciful to others.  
May the peace of God found in Christ Jesus  
guide us to bring peace in a troubled world,  
Empowered by God's Spirit,  
let us go out and be Christ's light to all the world.  
AMEN!