

Let us pray,

Lord, remind us of how important forgiveness is to you. May we live into the grace that you give to us daily.

Amen.

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In the ancient world, especially during Jesus' time, political and socio-economical and cultural divisions were just a part of life.

There were slaves, indentured slaves, full citizens, immigrants, foreigners, warriors, senators, elites, you get the picture.

People were heavily divided and you were told what rights you had and how you got to live.

In today's modern society, we like to think that we have improved upon that kind of society.

And in many ways we have.

There are more people who have more rights than ever before.

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But that desire to have some people at the top and some people at the bottom seems to be engrained in human nature.

We still today have first class and second class citizens.

It may be a little more covert than in ancient Rome, but we still have divisions of human dignity and equality.

Not everyone is treated equally.

Not everyone has the same opportunities, the same resources, the same financial and economic support.

And not everyone has political support.

Shocking, I Know.

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Now, I am specifically speaking about America here, obviously.

There are places in the world currently that are probably worse than what Jesus experienced in Roman society.

But because we are here in America, we are going to talk about America.

So in America, we have this tendency to express our values of freedom for all, the bill of rights, democracy.

All great things.

These documents are wonderful, beautiful and often times very loving and human dignity centered.

A lot of American ideals are based on human rights to live freely and to live a good life.

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But the problem is, even from its inception.

Who gets those rights and who doesn't, has not been so freely given.

For the vast majority of America's life, black individuals and women, were not afforded the same rights as white men.

Now, this is not new,

What I mean is, humans from the beginning of time have had ideals that benefit some people and not others.

And who those people were, differed based on the society and time period you lived in.

But when it comes to God and especially the teachings of Jesus, human dignity, human citizenship is not divided upon place of

birth, skin color, nationality, ethnicity, gender, sex, or any human classification.

When it comes to God, and especially the teachings of Jesus, we are all children of God.

We are all created in the image of God, each and every one of us.

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Its hard to disagree with that in concept right?

However, in practice, us humans have disagreed quite egregiously.

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The truth our minds just can't seem to grasp, is that our differences are not issues that need to be solved, but rather are a reminder that God's identity, is not based on a single human or group of humans.

God's identity is beyond whatever we can think up here on earth.

And God's creativity is the complexity of creation as a whole.

Sometimes we like to make God in our image, except we forget that God made US in God's.

The plural us.

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We have this tendency to try and make things comprehensible.

But when we do this with God, we lose out on the reality of who God is.

God is a complex, unknowable, uncomprehendable, unimaginable, uncreated being that put in motion the development of all life as we know it.

And through the life of the prophets, and especially Jesus Christ, this uncreated being who created all that is and that will be, has told us, that no human being is outside the love and forgiveness and view of God.

That we are all called by our creator, to love, to forgive, to have grace on all that God has called good.

And what we find in scripture, is that at the very core of it all, all of us have been called good.

We are good, all of us.

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That doesn't mean we all do good.

But because of who our creator is, there is goodness within each and every one of us.

And God is calling us to feed that side of us that is Good.

To see beyond the walls of our own experiences.

To truly put ourselves, not necessarily in the shoes of other humans.

But to put ourselves in the shoes of God.

Which means we don't get to choose which shoes we get to put on.

It means we put on every shoe.

It means we put on the shoe of the addict, the overachiever, the immigrant, the rich, the poor, the elite, the outcast, the prisoner, the persecutor, the victim, the hungry, the full, the homeless, the housed.

We put on every shoe.

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And we are called to recognize that God is present in each and every one of those people, circumstances and environments.

And how we treat each other matters more than anything else on this planet, according to God.

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Treat others well.

It does not matter, who they are, what they have done, where they have come from.

Treat people well.

Those are not my words, they come from Jesus.

From our Savior.

From thousands of years of theologians.

If we want to follow Jesus, we need to treat people well.

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This doesn't mean that we just let society crumble into chaos.

Its doesn't mean that we shouldn't have a judicial system or rules or consequences.

But what it does mean, is that we should be doing everything in our power, to make sure that we keep the door open for forgiveness.

That humans are treated as children of God.

That dignity of the human is maintained no matter what.

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We want to be able to be justified in our condemnation of others or groups of people.

We want to be able to be justified in not forgiving one another.

We want to be able to be justified in treating some people poorly and others well.

But that dang Jesus of ours asks a lot of us.

And just as the disciples didn't want to forgive either, Jesus reminds them of what is happening here.

He says don't just forgive 7 times, but seventy seven times.

Just as our heavenly Father forgives us.

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Jesus isn't commanding this of us because he wants to punish us.

He is commanding this of us because he loves us.

He loves all of us.

And he wants us to be able to be a part of this salvific work of bringing heaven on earth.

And the only way that we are going to be able to do this.

Is by forgiving one another over and over and over again.

And never ever, ever forgetting the reality that God is in each and every one of us.

And that how we treat one another, is how we treat God.

So if we love God, may we learn to love each other and treat each other well.

Amen.