



Link Up!

‘[Love]... does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. Three things will last forever; faith, hope, and love - and the greatest of these is love.’ 1 Corinthians 13 (vs 6, 13 (NLT))

For the rest of April

On Sunday 19th April we will be looking at Jesus encounter with Thomas in John 20.

Finally, on Sunday 26th April we have a break from the series as Ken is on retreat during the week and we have Stephen Ashby coming to lead our worship.

Looking forward to May:

On Sunday 3rd May we will be looking at Jesus encounter with the disciples on the beach in Galilee in John 21. This service will also include our communion service.

Then on Sunday 10th May we will be looking at Matthew 28: 16–20 – The Great Commission.

On Sunday 17th May we will be looking at Luke 24 50 – 52 & Acts 1: 1 – 11 – The accounts of Jesus’ Ascension.

Sunday 24th May is still to be arranged.

And on Sunday 31st May we will be meeting with Parkstone Baptist Church at Parkstone for one of our Joint Services.

I can’t say I’m a great fan of his, but Elton John’s 1976 song ‘Sorry Seems to Be The Hardest Word’, includes the line, ‘Sorry seems to be the hardest word’. But I’m not sure I agree ...

For me, the hardest word in life is not ‘sorry’, it’s ‘forgive’. Such a small word, yet it carries so much weight. Forgiveness may be one of the most powerful things we are called to do. It can bring healing, freedom, and transformation. But it is also one of the most difficult things we are called to do – forgiveness rarely comes easily.

By the time you read this, we will be the season after Easter. Christ has risen and we will be looking toward Pentecost. But let’s pause at the cross. In Luke 23:34, as Jesus hangs in agony, he prays, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Think about this for a minute.

Roman soldiers gamble for His clothes. Religious leaders mock Him. The crowd jeers. His friends scatter. Yet, amid excruciating pain and heart-breaking abandonment, Jesus speaks words of forgiveness. Not because anyone has apologised or recognised their failings, but right in the middle of wrongdoing.

Forgiveness is never easy. It is hard enough when someone recognises their wrongdoing and says ‘sorry’. It’s harder still when they don’t realise they’ve hurt you. But it’s hardest of all is when they do know, or should know, and show no remorse at all. And yet, this is often where we are called to forgive the most.

When we carry the weight of someone else’s actions; words which wound, behaviour which diminishes, it can be deeply damaging. We replay events, we long for acknowledgement, we seek justice, validation, even vindication. These are natural responses. But if we stay there, we become trapped – tied to the past, and unable to move freely into the future God has for us.

Other Notices:

Ken is away on retreat from Monday 20th – Thursday 23rd April.

Carri Hall is still selling her home-made cakes to raise funds for her visit to the Orfund home in Malawi. Donations for cakes should be left in the box on the table by her cakes. Carri goes to Malawi in May so do pray for her as she prepares for the trip.

Alissa Ford is starting her own cake making business and her price list and a selection of cakes she can offer are on the noticeboard in the lobby at church. Please complete the Order Form next to her list of cakes on the board including when you want your cakes by.

Don't forget that we are now recording the Sunday sermons and putting these onto our website. So, if you are missing from church on a Sunday you can catch up online during the week. The web address is www.longfleetbaptistchurch.co.uk.

Also, you can listen to a series of podcasts called 'Diving Deeper' where Ken discusses one or two of the bible study questions that the Monday and Wednesday Bible Studies look at with some of the folk who attend these groups. You can hear these by going to YouTube and searching for the Longfleet Baptist Church channel.

Forgiveness, in this sense, is not about excusing what happened or pretending it didn't matter. Instead, it is about releasing the hold the hurt has over us. It is choosing not to keep a record of wrongs, even when the other person does not ask for it to be erased or think there is anything to be erased in the first place.

Over recent months, I've been learning this lesson the hard way. Forgiving someone who apologises can be challenging, but at least there is a meeting of minds. Forgiving someone who shows no understanding, no remorse – this is something else. And yet, I am increasingly convinced this is what we are called to do.

Not because the other person deserves it, but because we need it.

Unforgiveness creates a barrier – not just between us and others, but between us and God. It hardens something within us. It makes it more difficult to hear His voice, to follow His leading, to live in His freedom.

Jesus' words in Mark 11:25 challenge us:

"When you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too."

It's not a one-time decision, but often a process and something we must return to again and again in prayer.

This is, perhaps, a more personal reflection than usual. It is written as much for myself as for anyone else, as I continue to navigate a difficult situation and learn what forgiveness really means in practice. But if there is one thing I would gently encourage, it is this: Don't wait for an apology before you begin to forgive.

Sometimes, the freedom we are looking for begins there.

Blessings
Stephen Chaloner