

Forgiven – Session 1 – Where Are You?

Video Outline

1. Wake-up Call
 - a. Guilt can be God's way of getting our attention
 - b. Signals that something needs to change
 - c. How do we handle guilt?
 - i. Find distractions
 - ii. Rationalize our behavior
 - iii. Blame others
 - iv. Admit we're wrong
2. Sin
 - a. About breaking a relationship, not just breaking a rule
 - b. Leads us to hide from God, like Adam and Eve
3. God's Perspective
 - a. Above all else, God is love
 - b. "Father" is who God is; "Lawmaker," "Judge," etc, is what he does
 - c. "Where are you?"
 - i. When we sin, God seeks us out
 - ii. The only sin God can't forgive is the one for which we won't ask forgiveness

Homework

- Read Gen 3:8
 - Do you ever feel a desire to hide yourself from God? Why or Why not?
- Read Gen 3:9 & Rom 5:8
 - - What are some areas of your life that you need to surrender to God's merciful love?

For further study: CCC 1422 – 1429, Luke 15:11-32

Forgiven – Session 2 – An Encounter with Mercy

Video

1. Woman caught in adultery (John 8)
 - a. What was she feeling?
 - b. Unexpected encounter with God's love and mercy
 - i. Jesus did not condemn her
 - ii. He also did not condone her sins
 - c. God sees us as we are and loves us
 - d. confession offers a new beginning
 - i. We are not our sins
 - ii. Mercy invites us to a much greater life.
2. God's Mercy
 - a. God is merciful
 - b. God is constantly seeking us out
 - c. We encounter Jesus himself in the Sacrament of Reconciliation
 - d. Jesus gave the Apostles his own authority and power to forgive sins
 - i. God has always used mediators
 - ii. Priest acts *in persona Christi capitis*, "in the Person of Christ the Head"
3. Human Aspect of the Sacrament
 - a. God knows we need a tangible experience of mercy and forgiveness
 - b. Confession gives us a physical encounter along with the supernatural reality of grace
 - c. We have a human need to say that we're sorry
 - d. We have a human need to actually hear someone say that we are forgiven
4. Healing
 - a. In confession Jesus forgives our sins
 - b. He also wants to address the root causes of our sin and heal the wounds of sin in our soul
 - c. The Sacrament gives us the grace to "go and sin no more"
 - d. God offers us his mercy so that we can extend his mercy to the world

Commit

Read John 8:2-11

- Have you ever felt like the woman: caught in your sins, accused by others, condemning yourself for mistakes you've made?
- What might she have been thinking and feeling when the scribes and Pharisees brought her before Jesus to make their point?
- How do you think she felt when everyone else left & she was left alone with Jesus?
- What may have gone through her mind when she heard his words, "Neither do I condemn you: go, and do not sin again"?

Prayerfully reflect on the ways God has shown you his mercy.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you 1 person to whom you can extend God's mercy.

- What concrete thing can you do to share God's mercy with this person?

For further study: CCC 1440 – 1445, John 8:1-11

Forgiven – Session 3 – The Rite Explained

Video

1. Priests' Perspective on Confession
 - a. It's a joy and privilege to welcome people back to God in the sacrament
 - b. Nothing new under the sun – you aren't going to shock the priest with your sin
 - c. Absolutely confidential (Seal of Confession)
 - d. Admiration for the courage of the penitent
 - e. Many priests forget everything they hear in the confessional
 - f. Sin is forgiven to make us free to love.

2. The Sacrament
 - a. Examination of Conscience
 - i. We prepare for the sacrament because we take the encounter with Christ seriously
 - ii. Consider what sins we have committed
 - iii. Keep in mind that we are approaching our loving Father
 - iv. "In my thoughts" – our words and actions have their root in our thoughts
 - v. "In my words" – we can sin through our speech
 - vi. "In what I have done" – sins of commission; what we most commonly consider as sin
 - vii. "In what I have failed to do" - sins of omission
 - b. Sign of the Cross
 - c. "Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been __since my last confession" – gives the priest context
 - d. State our sins
 - i. Simple, straightforward, honest
 - ii. Humbling but not humiliating
 - iii. List first your mortal sins according to number and kind, and if you forget a venial sin don't worry because it can be forgiven in other ways, such as through an act of contrition.

 - e. Penance
 - i. Act of love and thanksgiving in response to God's forgiveness
 - ii. Addresses some of the practical consequences of sin
 - f. Act of Contrition
 - i. Like a formal apology
 - ii. Can use a memorized prayer or make up your own
 - g. Absolution
 - i. Priest raises both hands (or at least his right hand) over penitent – invokes God's presence
 - ii. Recites the prayer of Absolution – this is the moment of forgiveness
 1. Father of mercies
 2. Pardon and peace
 3. Ministry of the Church.

Commit

Read Mark 12:29-31

- In what ways have I not loved God with my whole heart, soul, mind, and strength?
- In what ways have I failed to love my neighbor as myself?
- What do you think it means to see our sins the way God sees them?

For further study: CCC 1480 – 1484, 1846 – 1869

Forgiven – Session 4 – Biblical Foundations

Video – Part 1 (30 min)

1. Sin and Mercy in Scripture
 - a. Adam and Eve sinned, and God showed them mercy
 - b. This pattern is repeated throughout Scripture: Israel sins, and God responds with mercy.
 - c. Greatest example is at Mount Sinai
2. Exodus 34:6-7
 - a. Becomes one of the most important passages in the Old Testament
 - b. Eight key attributes of God
 - i. Merciful
 - ii. Gracious
 - iii. Slow to Anger
 - iv. Abounding in steadfast love
 - v. Faithfulness
 - vi. Storing up steadfast love for 1,000 generations
 - vii. Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin
 - viii. Does not clear the guilty (those who don't ask for forgiveness)
 - c. All the prophetic books quote this passage to remind Israel of God's mercy
3. Shuv
 - a. "Repentance" in Hebrew
 - b. Literally "to turn about"
 - c. Repentance is about changing from our way to God's way
4. David
 - a. Greatly blessed and favored by God
 - b. But then he commits adultery and murders to cover it up
 - c. David admits his sin and repents (2 Samuel 12) – in contrast to Saul who denies his sin
 - d. David has courage to confess because he has hope in God's mercy
 - i. Psalm 51:1 – "Have mercy on me, O God"
 - ii. Themes of mercy and forgiveness in Psalm 51 echo attributes of God revealed in Exodus 34:6-7
 - e. David shows us what it means to trust in God's forgiveness
 - i. David's last words, 2 Samuel 22 (also Psalm 18)
 - ii. 2 Samuel 22:21-27 – David says he is blameless and pure
 - iii. He can say this because he trusts that God's forgiveness truly cleanses him from his sin
 - iv. Psalm 103:12 – "As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us"
5. Exile
 - a. Nehemiah 9 – Ezra reminds the people of Exodus 34:6-7 and the pattern of Israel's sin and God's forgiveness
 - b. Exile is the physical manifestation of the reality of sin – being far from God
 - c. The return from exile is the *shuv* – the people are brought back to Jerusalem as a sign of repentance and returning to God.
 - d. The real scandal of Scripture is God's mercy

Forgiven – Session 4 – Biblical Foundations

Video – Part 2 (35 min)

1. Why do we confess our sins to a priest?
 - a. Matthew 9:1-8 – the paralytic lowered through the roof of Peter’s house
 - i. Physical healing is a sign that Jesus also has the power and authority to forgive sins.
 - ii. Son of man – reference to Daniel 7:13-14
 - iii. “They glorified God, who had given such authority to men” (Mt 9:8)
 - b. Authority in Matthew’s Gospel
 - i. Matthew 8-9 shows Jesus’s authority through ten miracles
 - ii. Number ten signifies authority
 - iii. Jesus has authority from the Father, and he has the authority to delegate that authority
 - iv. Matthew 10 – Jesus gives his authority to the twelve Apostles and sends them out
 - c. Authority in Luke’s Gospel
 - i. Luke 10 – Jesus sends out seventy disciples with this authority
 - ii. Jesus sends his disciples as his ambassadors – they speak his words
 - iii. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 – Paul talks about his ministry as an ambassador of Christ’s reconciliation
 - d. Authority in John’s Gospel
 - i. John 17:18 – Jesus sends the Apostles as the Father sent him (*apostello*, Greek meaning “to send”)
 - ii. In the Old Testament, the angels bear the presence and word of God, speaking and acting on his behalf
 - iii. In the New Testament, the Apostles now bear the presence and word of God, speaking and acting on his behalf
 - iv. Jesus shares his divine authority with men
 - v. John 20:22-23 – Jesus gives his Apostles authority to forgive sins

Commit

Read Exodus 34:6-7

- Which of the 8 key characteristics of God revealed in this passage stands out the most to you?
- Why?

Read Psalm 18 - a prayer of David thanking God for delivering him from his physical enemy, Saul.

- Compose your own short psalm of thanksgiving to God for his saving mercy toward you.

For further study: CCC 1440 – 1445

Forgiven – Session 5 – Answering Common Questions

Video Outline

1. Sacrament of Mercy
 - a. We need this sacrament when our lives start to sink.
 - b. Jesus reaches out to save us like he reached out to St. Peter.
2. Theological foundation for the Sacrament
 - a. God is love (1 John 4:8)
 - i. God's very nature is love – he is a community of Persons in the Trinity
 - ii. When we turn away from god's love, he seeks us out.
 - b. God's revelation of himself in Exodus 34:6 is mercy and steadfast love.
 - c. *Hesed*, Hebrew for "committed love" or "sustained love".
 - d. Jesus is constantly going out in his public ministry to seek others.
 - e. John 20:19-23
 - i. Jesus sends his Apostles out with authority to forgive sins.
 - ii. They continue the ministry of reconciliation started by Jesus.
 - iii. John 20:23 – "If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven."
 - f. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 – Paul and the other Apostles share in this ministry
 - i. This authority is passed on from the Apostles to their successors.
 - ii. The priest behind the priest: Jesus.
 - iii. The priest acts in the Person of Christ the Head.
3. Why can't I just go to God directly?
 - a. We're all called to go straight to God every day.
 - b. Confession is the most direct way to go to God for his forgiveness.
 - c. God has always worked through mediators (Moses, Elijah, Elisha, the Apostles).
4. Why does it make sense that God set up Confession this way?
 - a. It is very healthy to acknowledge mistakes and receive forgiveness.
 - b. God knows what we need.
5. What are the effects of the Sacrament?
 - a. We are reconciled with God (CCC 1468).
 - b. We are reconciled with God's family, the church (CCC 1469).
 - c. We encounter the healing power of God's mercy.
6. Rite of Penance
 - a. First step is to prepare ahead of time with an examination of conscience.
 - b. Confess our sins and sincerely try to remember all of them.
 - c. Penance is an expression of love after receiving the free gift of forgiveness.
 - d. Words of absolution – Jesus is present, and he is the one forgiving us of our sins.
7. Woman caught in adultery as an image of confession
 - a. Jesus did not condemn her in her sin.
 - b. He loved her too much to leave her in her sin: "Go and sin no more."

Commit

Read Luke 15:11-24

- How do you think the father felt when the son asked for his share?
- How is the prodigal son's experience like (or unlike) our experience of sin?
- How do you think the prodigal felt when his father welcomed him so eagerly?