



Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church  
*Pastor Terry's Thoughts of the Week*

## Forgiving

I have trouble accepting forgiveness! There, that's my confession. I know God has forgiven me over and over again. I do need a lot of forgiveness. But I have trouble forgiving anyone else – I like to hold on to those dribs and drabs of offense – so how can God be so generous?

Do you see the problem here? I am putting God in my place with my delights (holding on to hurts) and my inability to completely forgive. It's time for me to let God be God – he can and does forgive me and all people. I don't know how he does it, but he's not me and it happens. Now I have to work on accepting that wonderful generosity!

And that may be our work in forgiveness. We hear the phrase “forgive and forget”. I think that's kind of a bit much. I may forgive – and I do – but to forget means to never learn the lesson which may come from that situation. To remember with resentment is not to forgive. To remember in order to learn may have forgiveness involved. To remember just because it happened one day probably means that forgiveness came and is fully a part of that memory.

But there have also been things that I have forgotten. Friends will say “Don't you remember how s/he hurt you by refusing the gift you offered?” Actually, no. That's one of the beauties of my sieve-like memory box – forgetting a lot of little stuff.

But some of the stuff I remember is delightful – the family who replaced a stolen guitar many years ago. The children who still remember me when I return to parishes for anniversaries and reunions. The delight that comes in my daydreaming and remembering times when I think back over a wonderful life, with it's ups and downs, and remember all the wonderful people who pulled me up when I felt down. What I do think about is how I have never said “thank you”

enough for all the good I have received. With that in mind, why should I hang on to the “downs” that have happened?

In other words, I’m a very complex human being just like the rest of you. We do hang on to the strangest stuff. So, my work in the coming days and weeks will be to continue to day dream and let those dreams become meditations turning those “dreams” into thanks to God for the good people in my life – back then and right now!

What has happened is that I have, over the years, managed to learn a bit of forgiveness of others, but I have been slow to accept God’s open forgiveness of me. When that happens, I find that my desire and ability to forgive comes more easily.

God is good. We say that – now let’s begin to act as though we believe it. God is our healer and our strength in life – act that way. God is our guide in life – let’s do what he wants for he is the head of this kingdom that is his here and in the days to come.

Forgiveness? Sometimes it’s very hard but when it happens to us and from us it’s an amazing lift in life.

*TMK*

*-- Week of August 16, 2009*