

# Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church



## Weekly Sermon Series

### **Taking Root: Deep Breathing ...Forgiveness Micah 7:18–20; Colossians 3:12–17**

Jesus taught us to pray, “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” This simple petition sets us on a path toward healing. God knows we’ve made mistakes, held grudges, used guilt to manipulate others. Once we’ve been caught up in such problems it is difficult to change.

When my father and mother divorced many years ago the circumstance led my mother to feel bitter and resentful. For years she held on to those hurts and grudges. They tainted the relationships she had with her children and others. She knew it wasn’t right. She knew it was eating her up on the inside. But the bitterness wouldn’t go away. It wasn’t until she had only a short time to live that she was able to finally let go. When the hospice nurse visited to provide care as she lay dying, my mother made her confession. “I have carried bitterness for many years against my husband for divorcing me. Now,” she said, “I want you to know that I have finally forgiven him.” At that moment she was released from the burden. Her sins were forgiven, just as she now forgave the sins of her husband. What a relief! We could all take a deep breath.

Do you or someone you know live with resentments for past wrongs? How is this affecting relationships and quality of life for those involved? It isn’t easy to

forgive someone who hurt you, who betrayed you, who wounded you in a deep way. We might ask, "If I forgive, isn't that just like saying what they did is okay?" We think that the old law of revenge, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" seems much more just. The only problem with it is the consequence. If this law is applied to everyone, we would all be left blind and toothless. This sort of primitive justice leaves us all wounded.

On the other side of resentments lie those who believe they are guilty of sin and cannot let it go. They live with constant regret, guilt, and shame. They are convinced that no one could ever forgive them. This exaggerated sense of guilt results in self-condemnation, hopelessness, and despair. Do you or someone you know live with feelings of guilt and self-condemnation? How does it affect relationships and quality of life?

Micah 7:18b-19 says, "(God) does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in showing clemency. He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot. (God) will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." Colossians 3:13b says, "..if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." Forgiveness helps us take a deep breath, experience healing and go on living. Lord, help us forgive each other and ourselves as you have forgiven us. Amen.

-- Week of August 16, 2009