

Forgiving and Forgiven



Theme: Forgiving and forgiven. 6th Sunday after the Epiphany, Yr. A

Object: A Sunday School offering envelope

Scripture: "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23 (NIV)

I'm sure you all know what this is. (Hold up your offering envelope.) It is my offering envelope. Every week I bring an offering as a gift to God -- it is a very important part of our worship. Most of you have probably brought your offering today too. There are many places in the Bible that teach us the importance of presenting an offering to God, but the truth is that God is more interested in what's in our heart than he is in what's in our hand.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to people long ago, 'You must not murder. If you commit murder, you will be subject to judgement.' But I say, even if you are angry with your someone, you are subject to judgment." He went on to say that you will be face God's judgment if you call someone a bad name or curse them.

What did Jesus say we should do if we are guilty of any of these things? He said, "If you are presenting your offering to God and you remember that you have said something that hurt another person, leave your gift at the altar and go and ask forgiveness from that person. Then come back and offer your gift to God."

Before we give our offering today, perhaps we should ask ourselves a few questions. Have I been angry with someone this week? Have I had any arguments lately? Have I called someone a bad name? Have I said something about someone that wasn't true? If so, we should ask God to forgive us and we should go to the person we have hurt and ask them to forgive us. When we have done that, God will be pleased with our offering.

"Forgive" is a great old hymn written by Corinne Williams. The first verse of this hymn would be a good prayer for us today.

Forgive the things I've said in haste, O Lord, today,
As evening shadows fold again the light away;
O take away the sting and hurt from hearts, I pray;
And heal the wounded spirits, Lord, in Thine own way!

Heavenly Father, we would not think of committing murder, but we sometimes say things in anger that hurt other people. Help us to guard against hateful and hurtful words and forgive us as we ask those we have hurt to forgive us as well. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Works cited: "Forgive", Corinne Williams, 1940. Renewal 1968 Broadman Press (Admin. by LifeWay Christian Resources) Broadman Press, LifeWay Christian Resources

MINDING MONEY: Scatter money over a large designated area. Divide children into two teams and have children take turns running after ONE money bill and bringing back to offering

plate for their team. Continue until all the money has been collected. A teacher or leader can count the money and see which team has the most money.

FORGIVING RELAY: Divide the children into teams. Take turns running to the front line and getting a piece of paper that will say something for them to run back to the next player and tell them what is on the paper -- such as PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR HURTING YOU, or PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR TAKING YOUR TOY, or PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR NOT SHARING MY CANDY, etc. After the child has run back to the team and told the next player what the FORGIVE ME note said, that next player will run to the front line and get a note from the basket and continue to play until everyone on the team has had a turn to FORGIVE someone.

FORGIVING MUSICAL CHAIRS: Play musical chairs in the usual way but when someone is OUT (left without a chair), that one will share an idea about who or what we may need to forgive or ask forgiveness for and then will stand or sit in the middle of the musical chairs as the game continues.

MONEY ENVELOPES: Give the children envelopes and bright markers and stickers, to decorate their own money giving envelope. Children can then place some pretend money in their envelopes, but encourage children to bring their real money back to church the next week. Write TODAY'S BIBLE VERSE on the envelope to remind children to forgive others before bringing their money to the Lord.

FORGIVEN HEART: The children will be given supplies to cut out a traced heart and tape or glue it onto another piece of paper. Cut out a cross and glue it in the middle of the heart. The children will write FORGIVEN on the cross, and decorate it as they desire. Use it as a book marker or a wall picture.

FORGIVING BOOKLET: Let the children cut out various colored heart shapes of the same size. Staple or tie the hearts together with yarn to make a LOVE AND FORGIVING booklet. Each page can have pictures or words representing ideas they have about forgiving someone or things for which they may wish to be forgiven. Stickers can be used to decorate their FORGIVING booklet.

FORGIVING FLOWERS: Provide the children with different colored flower petals that have been cut out (for younger children) and traced petals for older children to cut out. Let children write ways to FORGIVE on each petal and then glue onto another piece of construction paper with a chenille wire taped to the flower petals as the flower stem. Hang FORGIVING FLOWERS papers around the room.

FORGIVING POEM: Type the words of the hymn "Forgive" from today's lesson on a piece of colored paper. Let children cut around the edges and then glue onto a piece of card stock. Color the card stock and decorate the edges with happy face stickers and hang it by yarn or a string.

BIBLE VERSE ROLE PLAY: Take turns with different children role playing the Bible verse by bringing their offering, leaving it on a table at the front of the room, then going to another child to say PLEASE FORGIVE ME and then return to place their money in the offering plate! If there are enough children, they will enjoy taking the offering as ushers, etc.

FORGIVEN MONEY: Give the children paper, markers and play money to use as a guide to draw a large bill and decorate to look like real money, but write today's Bible verse on the large "forgiven money" paper. Let children write their names on the money as one who wants to FORGIVE OTHERS and tape the money to a large poster board or to a bulletin board.

The Most Beautiful Valentine Ever



Theme: God's Love for Us and Our Love for him

Object: Some valentines and a crude wooden cross

Scripture: John 15:13 "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

This week we celebrate Valentine's Day. As you all know, Valentine's Day is when we send cards to friends and sweethearts to tell them we love them. Have you gotten your valentines yet? There are many different types of valentines from which to choose. Some have candy attached to them, some have chewing gum. Some valentines may come with a little stuffed animal. Some valentines are funny....some are serious. Some of them have a message of friendship and some have a romantic message like this one I got to send to my wife. Most of the valentines have hearts on them because the heart is used to represent love. Valentines are a nice way to say, "I love you."

This is the most beautiful valentine I have ever received. (Hold up the cross) Oh, I know it doesn't look very pretty like some of these valentines, but it beautiful because it represents the greatest love I have ever known. It represents Jesus' love for me. The Bible says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." That is what Jesus did when He died on the cross. He gave his life for me. That is why I say that the cross is the most beautiful valentine I have ever received. Jesus is the only one who has ever loved me enough to die for me.

Do you think Jesus wants a valentine from me? I think He does. But I don't think he wants a paper valentine like these. I think he wants me to show my love for him by giving my heart and life to Him. After all, he gave his life for me.

Dear Lord, thank you that you loved us so much that you sent Jesus to die on the cross for us. As Jesus showed His love for us on the cross, may we show our love for him by devoting our life to serving him. Amen.