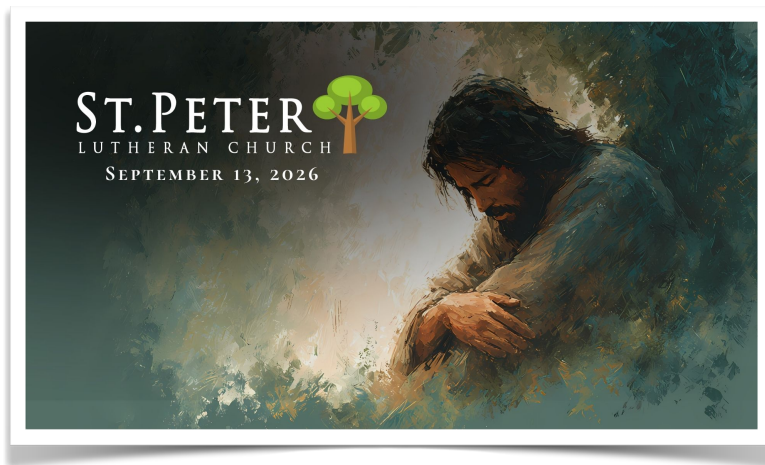




Mercy Changes Everything

A Five-Day Devotional from Pastor Chris's Sunday Message

September 14 - September 18, 2026

Forgiveness can be difficult from either side. Sometimes we struggle to believe that we are truly forgiven. Other times, we struggle to forgive someone who has hurt us. And sometimes the hardest words to say are simply, "I was wrong. Will you forgive me?"

Joseph's story reminds us that mercy can change what fear, regret, and resentment cannot. After their father Jacob died, Joseph's brothers feared that the kindness Joseph had shown them might finally end. Their past rushed back, and they wondered whether forgiveness had been temporary.

But Joseph responded differently. Instead of revenge, he chose mercy. Instead of using his position to punish, he used it to reassure and provide. His response shows us what happens when mercy becomes more than something we receive—it becomes something that shapes how we treat others.

This week, we will consider forgiveness from every direction: receiving God's mercy, examining our own hearts, asking forgiveness when we have done wrong, treating others with humility, and extending mercy when we have been hurt. Through it all, we discover that forgiveness is not weakness. It is one of the clearest ways Christ's love becomes visible through us.

When Mercy Is Hard to Believe

“Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?” — Genesis 50:19, ESV

When Jacob died, Joseph’s brothers didn’t just grieve—they panicked. Years earlier, they had terribly wronged Joseph, and now they wondered whether his kindness had only lasted because their father was alive. Their guilt convinced them that punishment must still be coming.

Fear often works that way. It can make us question mercy even after mercy has already been given. We may do the same thing with God, believing that our past failures are simply waiting to catch up with us. But Joseph refuses to judge them. Rather than seeking revenge, he reassures his brothers and promises to care for them.

This passage offers an important picture of grace. Receiving forgiveness means trusting that mercy is real. We don’t have to keep living as though yesterday’s sins are waiting around the corner to condemn us. God’s mercy invites us to acknowledge what we have done, receive His forgiveness, and begin living differently today.

Reflect: Is there something from your past that makes it difficult for you to truly believe you are forgiven? What would change if you trusted God’s mercy more than your guilt?

Prayer:

Merciful God, help me trust that Your forgiveness is real. Free me from the fear of my past and teach me to live confidently in Your grace. Amen.

Begin with the Heart

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight.” — Psalm 19:14, ESV

Pastor Chris closed with words that echo this prayer from Psalm 19. David asks God to look beyond what others can see and examine both his words and his heart. That matters because repentance begins long before we ever say, “I’m sorry.”

We can apologize for many reasons. Sometimes we genuinely regret hurting someone. Other times we simply want the uncomfortable situation to disappear. We may want to protect our reputation, avoid consequences, prove that we are still right, or quickly move past what happened. God invites us into something deeper.

Humility begins when we allow God to examine not only our actions but also our motives. We can tell Him the truth about ourselves because He is our Redeemer. We don't need to hide, defend, or pretend. When God begins changing what is happening inside us, our words on the outside begin to change too. An apology can then become more than something we say—it becomes an expression of a heart being transformed by grace.

Reflect: When you need to apologize, what are you most tempted to protect—your reputation, your comfort, your control, or your need to be right?

Prayer:

Lord, examine my words and my heart. Purify my motives and help my words bring honesty, healing, and grace to others. Amen.

Mercy, Not Excuses

“God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” — Luke 18:13, ESV

Jesus tells the story of a man who comes before God with nothing to prove and no excuse to offer. His prayer is simple: he knows he needs mercy, and he asks for it. Jesus says this humble man went home justified before God.

Real repentance doesn't bargain with God or carefully explain why our actions weren't really that bad. It simply tells the truth. Pastor Chris raises an especially challenging question: Would we still seek someone's forgiveness if that person had no power to punish us or give us something we needed?

That's an important test of humility. If we apologize only when there might be consequences, repentance can become another form of self-protection. But when we seek forgiveness because God is holy and because the person we hurt matters to Him, repentance becomes an act of worship. We stop asking, “What could happen to me?” and begin asking, “How have my actions affected someone God loves?”

Reflect: Is there someone to whom you owe an apology even though there may be no consequence for avoiding it? What keeps you from taking the first step?

Prayer:

God, be merciful to me. Give me the humility to admit when I am wrong, leave my excuses behind, and seek forgiveness sincerely. Amen.

The Strength to Humble Ourselves

“in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”
— *Philippians 2:3, ESV*

It is often easier to apologize to someone who has authority over us than to someone over whom we have authority. We understand the consequences of disappointing a boss, teacher, leader, or someone whose decisions affect us. But what about the people who cannot easily challenge us?

Parents, supervisors, church leaders, older siblings, coaches, and strong personalities all hold some measure of influence. Sometimes that influence can make it difficult for another person to say, “You hurt me,” or “You were wrong.” Pastor Chris challenges us not only to seek forgiveness upward, but also to practice humility toward those who may feel they have less power.

The gospel gives us a different picture of strength. Jesus did not use His power to elevate Himself above others; He humbled Himself and served. When we apologize even when we could easily avoid it, we communicate something important: You matter. Your feelings matter. Your dignity matters. Humility does not make us smaller. It makes room for someone else to be seen.

Reflect: Is there someone in your family, workplace, church, or community who may find it difficult to tell you when you've hurt them? How could you make it safer for that person to be honest with you?

Prayer:

Jesus, teach me the strength of humility. Help me value others, listen without becoming defensive, and be willing to take the first step toward healing. Amen.

Mercy That Moves Forward

“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” — Ephesians 4:32, ESV

Joseph could have simply told his brothers, “I forgive you,” and walked away. Instead, he did something more. He comforted them. He reassured them. He promised to continue caring for them. His mercy became visible through his actions.

Paul describes a similar kind of life in Ephesians. Bitterness and anger give way to kindness, compassion, and forgiveness because God's forgiveness toward us changes the way we respond to others. We forgive not because the hurt was insignificant, but because Christ's mercy toward us is greater.

Forgiveness does not mean pretending nothing happened, and reconciliation may still require wisdom, honesty, time, and healthy boundaries. But forgiveness means we refuse to let revenge have the final word. We place judgment in God's hands and ask Him to help us move toward healing.

This is where our journey through the week comes together. We receive mercy. We examine our hearts. We repent sincerely. We humble ourselves before others. And then we become people who extend the mercy we have received.

Joseph's story began with brothers terrified that their past would determine their future. It ends with mercy opening the door to something different. Through Christ, the same can be true for us.

Reflect: Where might God be asking you to replace bitterness or resentment with an intentional act of mercy, kindness, or forgiveness?

Prayer:

Gracious God, thank You for forgiving me through Christ. Help me release bitterness, choose mercy, and become someone through whom others experience Your grace. Amen.

A Little Encouragement to Share

If these devotional reflections have encouraged you, challenged you, or helped you see God's Word in a new way, consider sharing this booklet with a friend, family member, neighbor, or someone who might need a little encouragement this week.

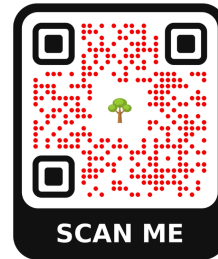
Sometimes a simple word of faith can make a difference.

Want to hear more?

Watch the message that inspired this week's devotional and continue the journey with us in worship.

Scan the QR code or visit:

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We would love to have you worship with us. Whether you've been part of our church family for years or you're simply looking for a place to worship, you are welcome here.

Sunday Worship
8:25 AM — Blended Worship
10:30 AM — Traditional Worship

Pastor, Christopher Metze
St. Peter Lutheran Church
Chapin, South Carolina

Come as you are. Come worship. Come grow with us.

