

Well, good morning. Welcome to Sherwood Oaks. I know Allen's already said that, but about a thousand more people have walked in since he said that. Carrie, you're welcome to preach here any Sunday morning. I'm assuming you brought only tithers this morning with you.

Yeah. Offering is going to look great this morning, gentlemen. I hope you all brought your wallets with you. Yeah, no, we are thrilled to have Kerry with us this morning and his. And his posse.

We're glad to have him here. Carrie has been a great friend to me. Seventeen years ago, I showed up in Bloomington and I heard a couple of names. One of them was Claudia Mitchell. I was very intimidated to meet Claudia.

She was just. I felt like she was the next thing to God, according to my sister Pam. And Kerry Curry. Now, all I knew about Kerry Curry is that he had this car lot somewhere, and in Bloomington, I come to find out that it's a little bit more than a car lot. He's a pretty big deal when it comes to cars in Bloomington.

So I was sort of intimidated by Kerry. But then you meet Kerry and you realize, oh, my word, this is one of the greatest men that I feel like the state of Indiana has produced. I'd give you the Wabash, whatever that award is, if I could. What is it? Sagamore.

The Sagamore Award. Oh, okay. If I have anything to do about Kerry, it's yours. Kerry is.

Is ending his preaching career here this morning. This is the last time he says he's going to preach. I'm not holding him to it because I want him to keep doing it, but. But I feel like you're here on a good Sunday if you showed up for this. So I'm going to bring Carrie up, I'm going to pray for him, and then I'm going to release him.

And you just say what you want to say this morning. Morning. Come on up here, buddy.

Lord Jesus, I thank you for my brother in Christ, who has been such an encouragement to me. It is bittersweet today to have him here standing in front of these people that I love so much and having them be introduced to someone I love so much and knowing that this could be the last time they get that opportunity. So, Lord, I know you got good plans and mind for Carrie, but I thank you that today they include being here with us. So bless him today as he brings us your word in Jesus name. Amen.

Thank you. Thank you so much. You can hear me again if you come to Indiana University. So if you kind of wonder what's. What's my plight.

Like, you know, I. I am absolutely passionate about college students

and I'm pretty humbled that I looked out and, and several have. Have made their way down to Bedford, Indiana, just to be here today. I asked them to pray for me. I didn't necessarily anticipate them showing up, but it's good to see them here.

But I love the work that I do on campus. This is a great month, the month of April, because it's little 500. And I know that when you think of little 500, you probably are thinking, oh, my goodness, that's the worst weekend in Bloomington, Indiana. But what, what you only hear are the bad things. And there's.

There's very few. Last last year there were no arrests, so we can brag about that. But the several of. And I, I'm not going to make them stand up, but several of the writers for Chi Alpha, which is a Christian organization and CSF Christian Student Fellowship, they are here today and they are writers. So they have been training for months and months to compete in the Little 500 race, but they're on a much bigger journey.

They're on a journey to be a light on a dark weekend. And they host other teams. They're doing all kinds of things on campus to just model Jesus and to be involved in that for me to be just a small part to encourage them and love on them is what I love to do. So that is where I. I'm trying to have all my focus in ministry.

And you guys are going to just be tolerant of me speaking up here, but I love pouring into them. So I don't know if the sermon topic was on anything that you might have got coming in or if it's on the screen, but if you looked at today's sermon subject, the subject is a tough one. It's on forgiveness. You may have rolled your eyes if you knew that or when I said that word, forgiveness, you may have just wanted to run for your life so you wouldn't have to hear anything that I might say that alludes to forgiveness. You maybe even might have thought, well, how could Carrie even know what I've been through?

Well, I want you to take a deep breath and know that I promise to give you a half an hour of love and support. And as tough as the subject is, I think it's probably best if I can get you to laugh a little bit or smile. So I want to show you a clip that I really love. It's Kristin Chenoweth. I don't know if you know who Kristin Chenoweth is, but she played the original Glinda in the Broadway musical Wicked.

And Kristin has a very strong faith and she gives us her practical way of forgiving in everyday life. So I'll let you watch this.

So there's your smile. Forgiveness is a difficult biblical truth for many of us. Well, I would wager for all of us, because it's much deeper than it is simple. Simple being those times in your life when the only words you hear are, you must forgive. To me, you.

You must forgive is a lot like, do not be anxious about anything. Do not worry about things in your life. Do not fear. Yes, each are biblical truths. But what I've struggled with is that behind each of those biblical truths, there's something much deeper.

There's something that's created that anxiety, that worry, that fear, and yes, the deep hurt that can be attached to forgiving. It's a bit ironic, but it's actually a gift from God that I chose to speak on that subject this morning. I was originally supposed to be here. I think it was the first weekend in January, but the snow came and no church on that Sunday. So we pushed pause, and then I'm here this morning.

But when I was preparing, I was actually preparing for a message I was going to give at the University of Michigan, and I kept thinking, what can I talk about that would really be impactful for these young people I was speaking to? But here's what I found out. When I was writing this message about forgiveness, the message was for me, and it's probably a message, maybe for you, too. So over and over again in my life, this is how God's worked. He'll put something right in front of me.

I'll experience something. That truth will be right there. And as God does with me, and he probably does with you, I envision him with his arms crossed, just going, okay, so what are you going to do with this one? So today I understand the deep hurt that can be attached to forgiving. So I'm going to approach this message with great tenderness and care.

So as we prepare for that, let's go to the Father in prayer. Father God, you know the deep hurt that can be attached to fully embracing your command to forgive through your word today and our ability to see ways to work through resolving hurt. Let us find the peace and joy that you so much want for us in this temporary earthly life. We cry out to you in this painful area of our lives for steps towards healing and ultimately forgiving, as you ask us to do in your Son's name. Amen.

So in preparing for today, I read my Bible. I listened to many, many podcasts. I looked at every book I had that even touched on the subject of forgiveness. And I talked to several strong believers that I looked up to. And if I'm being honest with you, I was looking for some exception to what I believe God's command was.

Because surely God doesn't mean I have to forgive everyone. Haven't you felt that way? Forgiveness seems like an unfair gift that we have to give someone who has hurt us. So what did I discover? Forgiveness is a command by God.

But I believe that God would not want to put any of us in a situation

where we're hurt over and over again. Forgiveness is not a free ticket for someone to keep hurting us. We're called to love. We're commanded to do that. But be cautious of being inflicted with hurt where reconciliation is not achieved.

We are called to be reconciled with God through the blood of Christ. Then we can look to reconciliation for others. Romans 5:10 says this for if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by death of his Son, much more now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. Step one to beginning the forgiveness process is praying for those who hurt us. Jesus tells us, pray for those who hurt you.

There is nothing wrong for asking the Lord to get them to stop doing what they're doing. But praying for them involves asking good for them, seeking the Lord's presence in their lives, and a transformation of their hearts. Asking good for them. That's really hard, and you may have a deep sigh a couple of times this morning, but we have to. And even though it seems like it's not fair, asking good for them enables us to take just one step back and consider this Hurting people hurt other people when unresolved hurt is at bay.

And remember that when sometimes we feel like the person that hurts us seems to get away with absolutely everything, that thought is our minds trying to get us to believe a lie. They aren't getting away with everything. They just haven't been able to process their own hurt. And what might seem like a free ticket is actually a blurry mess of unresolved peace. You know, God created us all differently, just the way he wanted us to be.

Me, I'm a bit sensitive, a bit of a PeaceMaker. At least that's what my enneagram might point to. I'm a 9 2. And even though I'm probably something in all of those categories from 1 to 9, I've often felt that my makeup made me more prone to feeling hurt than others. But what I've learned throughout life is that no one gets through this life without experiencing hurt.

Deep hurt. Some of us show it more, some of us internalize it, and some of us may deny it, but we all experience it. Hurt can come from families, probably most often to the workplace and friends, and even in the church, as the church is full of imperfect people. I personally have been hurt by the church. I've been hurt by friends and situations in the workplace.

But I'm choosing to share this morning one of the most common to many of us family. Your story may not be like mine, but I have no doubt you've struggled with hurt in some part of your journey. I wish I could find a way to keep all of you from hurting. When I do campus ministry and with several of the people that are here today, they've probably heard me say if I could pray for one thing is that you would not have to ever hurt life. But we know if we read the Scriptures,

John 16:33, we're not going to get through this life without some pain, without some turmoil, without some trouble.

So having that hope and faith in Jesus will get us through that. So I'm going to tell you my story, not for sympathy at all, but to let you know it took me way too long to reconcile with Jesus what I couldn't come to terms with and the forgiveness that I could not give. So we learn from stories. And if you being here this morning can take you one step closer to embracing the command of forgiveness, then I believe I've preached what I've preached holds true that God uses all things, even our past, for his good if we let him. 2003 through 2008 were incredibly tough years in my life.

I had an abundance of blessings, a loving wife, two incredible sons in their very young years, and a mother and father who I loved. My father was diagnosed with esophageal cancer, and within a year my mother developed accelerated dementia. Julie discovered a lump and was diagnosed with breast cancer. And we had two young boys, ages 4 and 7, who needed stability in the midst of all the chaos. My siblings, who all lived out of town, made only a few visits to see their parents.

And every critique I heard about the care I was seeking from the doctors was extremely difficult for me, as I did not know how I was even going to be able to juggle all of this. But I did. I resented the lack of help, the critique, and seemingly absent concern for my own family unit. I remember in 2005, I was sitting in the bedroom floor beside my father just after he had died, and I thanked God for not allowing him to suffer another day. But then I had to make those horrific calls to my siblings.

And with each call, there was only a thanks for calling, nothing else. Two and a half years later, my mother died, and it was the same response. What I needed most of all was something besides thank you for calling. What I needed was someone, anything, to express gratitude for the love and care I showed for my parents. And also that I cared for two young boys and a wife with breast cancer.

But it never came. And the hurt grew. And yes, I did forgive. Of course I forgave. That is what I'm commanded to do.

But I was a forgiveness phony. I said I forgave. But every time I thought about things, the pain returned and I realized I hadn't forgiven at all. Sure, this possibly could resonate with some of you too. At the same time, I was trying to figure out how to love my siblings, and I did.

But I struggled to understand. That call to love seemed to be so much easier than that command to forgive. And I'm not always good at sharing how I feel, but I was just able to let it out one day. And after telling my story in a lot more detail than what I shared with

you, the person I shared it with said these simple. I am so sorry for the pain you've held onto for so long.

Those words are what I needed to hear to start this whole process of forgiveness. I'm sorry. And I realized if I continued to wait for the people that hurt me to say those words, I was really only allowing the hurt to continue. And the reality is, they may never say they're sorry. I needed Julie to be well and not do anything but get well.

And God is good. Every year we celebrate her being cancer free. So from my studies, from endless sermons that somehow God amazingly put in my path, I realized that to begin healing and forgiving, I didn't need the one that hurt me to say I'm sorry. But I needed another person. Not to fix, but to walk closely beside me and to bear witness to the pain and say, I'm sorry.

So today, as I've talked, you've probably thought about deep hurt. You've probably thought about your own forgiveness story and any unresolved hurt that you've endured in your life. So I want to give you all what I needed for so long so that you can take the needed steps towards forgiveness and all God has for you in all the days ahead.

I'm so sorry. I'm sorry for the things that were said to you. I'm sorry for the lies and gossip that has tarnished your character. I'm sorry for the times your trust was obeyed, betrayed. I'm sorry for the loss of life having relived so many harsh moments that can't seem to fade.

I'm sorry for the sleepless night you've cried yourself to sleep. I'm sorry for the times you just needed to hear. I love you. I'm so, so sorry. You deserve to stop suffering for what another person has done to you.

I want you to choose to forgive. Forgiveness is a gift from God that flows from him to us so we can give it to others. Sometimes we get things all messed up in our minds and we believe that by forgiving we somehow believe that whatever happened is okay. It's not okay. But that's not the weight and burden you or I need to carry.

There are two parts, I believe, to really embracing forgiveness. One is fact and one is impact. We can forgive for the fact of what has happened and that allows us to honor God by forgiving as we're commanded to do. But at the same time, we have to process the impact of how this wound has affected us. And often, as I've shared, in my case, sin can enter as the enemy loves to see us suffer.

I forgave for not feeling any love or gratitude for the years I spent caring for my family. But the impact was the hours and resentment. Yikes. That's sin that played upon my life and the impact I couldn't

figure out how to work through. And I'm ashamed of the bitterness.

Yikes. That's another sin that crept into my life as I could not work through the impact of how I was feeling. But I have good news. My discovery in truth came directly from the scriptures and I want to give it to you. I've already told each of you that I was sorry and I hope you've embraced this initial gift.

Why? Because I'm truly sorry for whatever you've experienced. So let's talk about the fact. And I'm going to put up on the screen here. You might want to write it down or make a mental note, but this is the fact part of it.

Out of obedience to God, I am choosing to forgive. And you could fill in the blank any way you want. So the fact is, out of obedience to God, I am choosing to forgive. Here's where the impact comes in and where my human heart struggles to heal. Surely the Blood of Jesus will cover it.

Can you put that one up for me, please? And where my human heart struggles to heal, surely the blood of Jesus will cover it. Jesus blood was shed so we could receive God's forgiveness. And as we receive his forgiveness, we must let that forgiveness flow through us to others. Why?

Because he wants us to live. Why? If we aren't living, we can't fulfill our calling to bring others to him as we are weighted down by hurt and wounds. That's why God's command to forgive is to be done now. He forgave us, so we accept that gift of love.

And by his grace and goodness, we give it to others. Now, you don't have to take my word or the words of authors or theologians or mentors that have spoken and written on this subject, but we do have to embrace the Word of God. So if you can stand, I think we all need to read from Matthew 6:19 through or 9 through 15. I'm going to read and you read aloud the underlined words. When the disciples asked Jesus how they should pray, he said, pray like our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

Isn't it interesting that when Jesus was asked how to pray, he made forgiveness one of the main focuses of his daily prayer life. And then

he packed that punch in our face. If we don't forgive others, our Father in heaven won't forgive us.

Let's look closer. This is a daily prayer. How do we know that he says, give us this day our daily bread, or as I would interpret that, our daily provision. How incredible would it be if our morning prayer time, even before we started our daily routine of preparing for work or whatever your day holds, you prepared your heart to forgive others. The clip I showed you at the beginning is really a mindset we should have.

If we embrace that daily prayer and let that prayer penetrate our hearts, we have already put on the armor of God before we even take that first step sip of coffee. And then he says, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. When we delay forgiving or refuse to we are allowing the enemy, or it's written, the evil one, to control our lives. When we don't forgive, bitterness, anger, retaliation can creep into our lives like a sly fox. The enemy, like a sly fox, is very smart in taking us in our most vulnerable state and allowing us to unconsciously let sin penetrate our hearts.

Like I mentioned in my story, I attached bitterness to my hurt. Other things such as anger and retaliation can come, and when those penetrate our hearts, we no longer focus on the work of Christ that He has for us to do in this broken world. In fact, our brokenness adds to that. Here's another thing I discovered. Anytime in scripture, old or new, where anger, bitterness, resentment are in the hearts of God's people, we find right near that passage instruction to forgive.

And if we don't, the evil one declares victory. Look at these passages. Paul writes in Ephesians 4:26 in your anger, do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry. Do not give the devil a foothold.

And Paul goes on to say in verses 29:32, do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen and do not grieve. The Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other as Christ. God forgave you.

As I've gotten older, I wish I had had someone really share this with me. Because what. What I really know is that with all this stuff happening in the world today, there is so much to embrace. God's grandeur is everywhere. And if we get stuck in the hurt, we're going to miss everything God has for us when we don't forgive and say.

And where my human heart struggles to heal, I know the blood of Jesus

will cover it. We're allowing that pain to grow deeper until our hearts become hardened. And that is not God's plan for our life. When things happen to you, it can be significant and there is absolutely no minimizing that. But it doesn't have to be life ruining.

Forgiveness is a provision that God gives us to heal. It's one of his greatest gifts. We can't miss this if we're going to live life to its fullest. I'm going to ask Pam to come up. Most of you probably know that wherever I speak, Pam goes with me and she's going to close out this message, but as she does, I'm going to read to you one of my favorite poems.

It was penned by Mother Teresa. I have it in my office on a plaque. So if you've been in my office, you've seen it. But it goes like this.

People are often unreasonable and self centered. Forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives. Be kind anyway. If you are honest, people may cheat you.

Be honest anyway. If you find happiness, people may be jealous. Be happy anyway. The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.

Give the world your best you have and it may never be enough. Give your best anyway. For you see, in the end it was between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway thank you for listening to this message from Sherwood Oaks Christian Church. Did you know you can watch all of our video content, both current and past, on our YouTube channel.

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