

IT'S ABOUT TIME TO FORGIVE

JULY 17, 2011

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED HOW WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE OFTEN SOUND JUST LIKE THEIR MEANINGS? ESPECIALLY WORDS THAT ARE USED TO DESCRIBE THINGS. WORDS LIKE “HARD” AND “SOFT”, “PRETTY” AND “UGLY,” “TENDER” AND “TOUGH,” “GOOD” AND “BAD.” THE SAME I THINK IS TRUE FOR THE CENTRAL WORD IN OUR FIRST TEXT THIS MORNING - “MERCY.” “MERCY” IS A GENTLE WORD, PLEASANT TO SAY AND TO HEAR. ITS SOUND SUGGESTS COMPASSION. IT SINGS OF FORGIVENESS. SURELY, ITS OPPOSITE IS “GRUDGE.”

OCCASIONALLY, IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, I HAVE SUFFERED FROM BOUTS OF INSOMNIA—SINCE I’M NOT GETTING ANY OLDER—I’M NOT SURE EXACTLY WHY. SOME, I KNOW, WOULD SAY IT’S MY CONSCIENCE KEEPING ME AWAKE, BUT SINCE I BELIEVE GOD’S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT, I DON’T THINK IT’S THAT. SOME SAY IT COULD BE STRESS RELATED, BUT WITH ONLY 500 OR SO PEOPLE TO PLEASE THAT COULDN’T BE IT. WHATEVER IT IS, SOMETIMES I CAN’T SLEEP AND I USUALLY GET UP AND TURN ON THE TV HOPING IT WILL MAKE ME DROWSY. NOW I CONFESS I’M A CHANNEL SURFER AND WITH DOZENS OF CHANNELS TODAY THERE ARE PLENTY OF CHANNELS TO SURF. IT WAS ONE OF THOSE SLEEPLESS NIGHTS THAT I FLIPPED OVER TO THE DISNEY CHANNEL HOPING THEY MIGHT BE SHOWING THEIR PROMO ON THE DISNEY CRUISE AND I COULD DREAM MYSELF TO SLEEP. INSTEAD, I FOUND MYSELF WATCHING A CARTOON STORY TITLED, OF ALL

IT'S ABOUT TIME TO FORGIVE

JULY 17, 2011

THINGS, “THE STORY OF GRUDGE.” SINCE I DON’T THINK IT WON ANY AWARDS YOU MAY NOT HAVE SEEN IT. “GRUDGE” WAS A TERRIBLE CREATURE WHO LIVED ON TOP OF A COLD, BARREN MOUNTAIN. HE WAS UGLY AND SMELLY – A DISGUSTING CREATURE, AS UNATTRACTIVE AS HIS NAME. TO TOP IT OFF, HIS DISPOSITION MATCHED HIS LOOKS AND HE NEVER SMILED. HE, OF COURSE, HAD NO FRIENDS BECAUSE IN THE WORDS OF THE NARRATOR, “HE LIVED ON SPIRE, AND COLLECTED ILL WILL.”

OF COURSE, AS YOU WOULD EXPECT IN A DISNEY STORY, THERE WAS A HERO, A BOY NAMED TIMOTHY, WHO, SORT OF LIKE DAVID IN THE DAVID AND GOLIATH STORY, WAS ABLE TO DEFEAT “GRUDGE” IN A SURPRISING WAY. HE DID IT WITH FORGIVENESS, OR IN THE WORDS OF OUR BEATITUDE THIS MORNING – MERCY. TIMOTHY SAW HOW MISERABLE AND UNHAPPY “GRUDGE” WAS, AND HE FELT SORRY FOR HIM. ALTHOUGH “GRUDGE” TREATED TIMOTHY BADLY, INSTEAD OF GETTING ANGRY WITH “GRUDGE,” HE FELT SORRY FOR HIM AND OFFERED TO FORGIVE HIM. WITHOUT ANGER, WHICH WAS THE ONLY FOOD HE COULD EAT, GRUDGE BECAME SMALLER AND SMALLER. FINALLY, THE NARRATOR PROCLAIMED HE DISAPPEARED HAVING BEEN DEVoured BY HIS OWN PETTINESS AND DESPAIR.

IT'S ABOUT TIME TO FORGIVE

JULY 17, 2011

AND WHAT HAPPENED TO TIMOTHY? WHY OF COURSE, HE GREW INTO A STRONG, HEALTHY, AND HANDSOME PRINCE AND LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER! HURRAH! – DON'T WE ALL LIKE STORIES WHERE THE VILLIAN GETS HIS JUST REWARD? SURELY OLD "GRUDGE" GOT WHAT HE DESERVED. AND YET, MAYBE BEFORE WE BURY "GRUDGE" WE MIGHT WANT TO TAKE A SECOND LOOK AT THE BODY. LOOK CLOSELY, DO YOU SEE ANYTHING FAMILIAR? ISN'T THERE A LITTLE OF "GRUDGE" IN ALL OF US? NONE OF US ARE REALLY PERFECT LIKE TIMOTHY WHO NEVER SAID A BAD WORD OR HAD A BAD THOUGHT ABOUT ANYONE. I STRONGLY SUSPECT THAT SOMEWHERE IN YOUR LIFE (I KNOW THERE IS IN MINE.) THERE STILL LURKS AN OLD GRIEVANCE OR GRUDGE YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO FORGIVE...OR FORGET. IN FACT, THOUGH WE MAY NOT WANT TO ADMIT IT, WE MAY EVEN REMEMBER IT WITH SOME FONDNESS. MAYBE THAT'S WHAT VICTOR HUGO WAS TALKING ABOUT IN HIS CLASSIC BOOK, "LES MISERABLES" WHEN HE WROTE, "THE MALICIOUS HAVE A DARK HAPPINESS." IT'S LIKE HAVING A PERFECTLY GOOD WOOL COAT AND WEARING IT INSIDE OUT – IT KEEPS YOUR WARM, BUT IT ALSO MAKES YOU ITCH.

IF YOU HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED SUCH FEELINGS, REST ASSURED THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE. IT'S PART OF BEING HUMAN, I BELIEVE, TO HARBOUR OUR HURTS, PACKING THEM AWAY, AND THEN

IT'S ABOUT TIME TO FORGIVE

JULY 17, 2011

REMEMBERING THEM WHEN WE ARE FEELING SORRY FOR OURSELVES. JOHN OGILVIE DESCRIBES IT AS PACKING OUR HURTS AWAY LIKE EXTRA BATTERIES ON OUR MENTAL CUPBOARDS, WHERE FROM TIME TO TIME THEY WILL LEAK ACID ONTO THE CLEAN SHELVES.

AS I REFLECTED ON THE CHARACTER, "GRUDGE" IN THE CHILDREN'S STORY IT BECAME CLEAR TO ME THAT HE WAS MORE THAN THE PERSONIFICATION OF SOMETHING BAD. HE IS ALSO A GOOD REMINDER OF WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DON'T LET GO OF FORMER HURTS, AND ALLOW THEM TO EAT AWAY AT OUR VERY BEING. SURELY, NONE OF US WANT TO END UP LIKE "GRUDGE," LETTING OUR LIVES BE DESTROYED BY OUR INABILITY TO FORGIVE – TO SHOW MERCY. AS I THOUGHT ABOUT IT, I WAS OVERCOME BY AN OVERWHEMING DESIRE TO FORGIVE EVERYBODY THAT I HAD EVER HARBOURED SUCH FEELINGS AGAINST ONCE AND FOR ALL, AND FOREVER MORE! SURELY IT WAS ABOUT TIME FOR ME TO FORGIVE. OF COURSE LIKE MANY OTHER THINGS, IT'S MUCH EASIER SAID THAN DONE.

MAYBE THAT'S WHY WHEN JESUS TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES TO PRAY, HE FELT THE NEED TO GO BACK AND RE-EMPHASIZE WHAT HE HAD SAID ABOUT OUR NEED TO PRACTICE FORGIVENESS. I THINK HE KNEW IT WAS MUCH EASIER TO SAY THAN IT WAS TO DO. HE DID NOT DO THIS WITH ANY OTHER PART OF THE PRAYER. I THINK WHAT JESUS IS

IT'S ABOUT TIME TO FORGIVE

JULY 17, 2011

SAYING HERE IS THAT FORGIVENESS IS NECESSARY IF WE ARE GOING TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD AND WITH EACH OTHER.

HOWEVER, LIKE ANYTHING ELSE – YOU CAN'T CLIMB A MOUNTAIN WHILE YOU ARE STILL STUMBLING OVER MOLEHILLS! AND LET'S FACE IT – THAT'S WHAT MOST OF OUR PETTY GRIEVANCES REALLY ARE – MOLEHILLS OR STUMBLING BLOCKS THAT FORCE US TO KEEP OUR EYES ON OUR FEET AND THE PAIN OF THE PAST, RATHER THAN EXPERIENCING THE FORGIVENESS THAT CAN BE OURS IN THE PRESENT. THE ONLY REAL SOLUTION IS TO DILIGENTLY GET RID OF THEM ONE AT A TIME. MARY DONOHUE, IN HER BOOK, "THE PEARL AND THE OYSTER," CALLS IT THE "SYSTEM OF LITTLE MERCIES." SHE SAYS "YOU BEGIN WITH DAILY ERASURES, LIKE THE CLASSROOM CHALKBOARD AT THE END OF EACH DAY. UNLESS THE TEACHER MARKS SAVE, EVERYTHING GETS ERASED. IT TURNS TO CHALK DUST AND FALLS ON THE FLOOR.

IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO TAKE A LESSON FROM THE JANITOR. DON'T MARK SAVE AROUND YOUR PETTY GRIEVANCES ANYMORE. GRIND THEM INTO DUST. PULL THEM ALL OUT OF HIDING; WRITE THEIR DETAILS IN BIG SQUARE LETTERS ON THE CHALKBOARD OF YOUR MIND...THEN WIPE YOUR SLATE CLEAN.

IT'S ABOUT TIME TO FORGIVE

JULY 17, 2011

NOW I'M NOT SUGGESTING THAT YOU SIT AROUND FOR DAYS AT A TIME DREDGING UP PET PEEVES. I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING MORE DEPRESSING. I *AM* SUGGESTING THAT YOU USE THE CHALKBOARD TECHNIQUE AS PART OF YOUR DAILY LIVING FROM NOW ON. GIVE YOURSELF A TIME LIMIT. MAKE A BARGAIN WITH YOURSELF. SAY IT OUT LOUD. "I'LL GET RID OF ALL TODAY'S GRUDGES BEFORE THE SUN GOES DOWN. IF I REMEMBER ANY OLD ONES, I'LL THROW THOSE OUT TOO." DON'T WORRY ABOUT MISSING ANY. OLD GRUDGES HAVE A WAY OF POPPING UP AGAIN AND AGAIN. THEY ARE TENACIOUS LITTLE CREATURES, READY TO FIGHT FOR THEIR PLACE IN THE SPOTLIGHT.

THERE'S ONLY ONE CATCH. YOUR ERASER HAS TWO SIDES, JUST AS SURELY AS A DIME HAS HEADS AND TAILS. THEY'RE CALLED *FORGIVE* AND *FORGET*, AND IF ONE OF THEM IS MISSING, YOUR DAILY ERASURE IS JUST AS COUNTERFEIT AS A ONE-SIDED COIN. IT'S FAKE. BOGUS. IT WON'T BUY A THING."

IT'S LIKE THE STORY OF TWO OLD MAID SISTERS WHO WERE MEMBERS OF ONE OF MY PASTOR FRIEND'S CHURCH SEVERAL YEARS AGO. ALTHOUGH THEY WERE WELL INTO THEIR SIXTIES WHEN THEIR PARENTS DIED, THEY STILL ACTED LIKE SIX YEAR OLD SIBLINGS. MY FRIEND TOLD OF VISITING ONE OF THE SISTERS SEVERAL MONTHS AFTER THE PARENTS' ESTATE HAD BEEN SETTLED FOR AFTERNOON

IT'S ABOUT TIME TO FORGIVE

JULY 17, 2011

TEA. THE OLD WOMAN APOLOGIZED WHEN SHE SERVED THE TEA. “I MUST APOLOGIZE FOR THESE OLD PLATES. WE HAD A LOVELY SET OF CHINA IN OUR FAMILY, BUT MY SISTER TOOK THEM WHEN WE SETTLED THE ESTATE. I REALLY DIDN'T MIND, OF COURSE. SHE WAS THE OLDEST – SHE HAD EVERY RIGHT TO TAKE THEM. AND I SO HOPE SHE ENJOYS THEM!”

MY FRIEND SAID THAT IF THIS LADY HAD WANTED A NEW SET OF CHINA SHE COULD HAVE EASILY AFFORDED ONE JUST AS NICE AS HER SISTER HAD TAKEN. BUT INSTEAD, SHE CHOSE TO BURDEN HERSELF BY REMINDING HERSELF DAILY OF A PETTY GRIEVANCE SHE HAD WITH HER SISTER. IN A SENSE, SHE BUILT A MOLEHILL RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF HER KITCHEN SO SHE COULD TRIP OVER IT EVERY TIME SHE PULLED OUT HER OLD CHINA.

DID SHE HAVE MERCY? NOT A DROP OF IT. HAD SHE FORGIVEN HER SISTER? OH, SHE GAVE IT LIP SERVICE, BUT THAT'S ALL. SHE NEVER FORGAVE HER SISTER FOR SHE REFUSED TO FORGET WHAT SHE HAD DONE. IN FACT, I THINK SHE HAD WRITTEN HER GRIEVANCE ON THE CHALKBOARD OF HER MIND IN INDELIBLE INK!

IT'S ABOUT TIME TO FORGIVE

JULY 17, 2011

SOME PEOPLE WOULD SAY SHE WAS ACTING LIKE A CHILD. HOWEVER, I WOULD SAY SHE WAS MUCH MORE CHILDISH THAN CHILDLIKE – AND THERE IS A DIFFERENCE. JESUS ONCE SAID, “UNLESS YOU TURN AND BECOME LIKE CHILDREN, YOU WILL NEVER ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.” I AM CONVINCED THAT ONE OF THE WAYS WE WOULD DO WELL TO BE CHILDLIKE IS THE EASE WITH WHICH A CHILD IS ABLE TO FORGIVE AND FORGET.

MANY YEARS AGO IN MY FIRST CHURCH, WE WERE HAVING A FAMILY WORKDAY AT THE CHURCH. ROUNDING A CORNER OF THE EDUCATION BUILDING I FOUND TWO OF OUR YOUNGER BOYS ROLLING IN THE GRASS TRYING TO BEAT UP EACH OTHER. I KNEW THEM BOTH – THEY WERE USUALLY BEST FRIENDS. I YELLED AT THEM AND THEY PULLED APART AND SCRAMBLED TO THEIR FEET. THEY BACKED AWAY FROM EACH OTHER, BUT IF LOOKS COULD KILL I WOULD HAVE HAD A DOUBLE FUNERAL THE NEXT DAY! THE FIGHT WAS OVER, BUT THEY SEEMED TO BE BITTER ENEMIES.

THUS, I COULD NOT BELIEVE MY EYES WHEN 15 MINUTES LATER WE GATHERED EVERYONE TOGETHER FOR A LUNCH BREAK TO SEE THE SAME TWO BOYS WALKING UP TOGETHER ARM IN ARM. WHATEVER THEIR DIFFERENCES, THEY HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN SETTLED.

IT'S ABOUT TIME TO FORGIVE

JULY 17, 2011

CHILDREN ARE LIKE THAT – THEY INSTINCTIVELY KNOW THAT CARRYING A GRUDGE MEANS PLAYING ALL BY YOURSELF. THEY FORGIVE AND FORGET. IF I HAD WAITED TWO DAYS AND ASKED ONE OF THOSE BOYS WHAT THEY WERE FIGHTING ABOUT, HE MORE THAN LIKELY WOULD NOT HAVE KNOWN AND WOULD WONDER WHY I BOTHERED TO ASK.

YOU SEE, CHILDREN DON'T EXPECT LIFE TO BE LIKE A VENDING MACHINE IN WHICH YOU INSERT A COIN AND RECEIVE A CANDY BAR. THEY KNOW THAT SOMETIMES THE SCORE DOESN'T COME OUT EVEN. BUT THEY ALSO KNOW, AT LEAST MOST OF THEM, THAT THERE ARE WAYS TO DEAL WITH PETTY GRIEVANCES WITHOUT LETTING THEM RUIN THE DAY.

LIKE ALL THE OTHER BEATITUDES, THIS ONE IN MATTHEW 5:7 HOLDS A PROMISE. IN FACT, THIS ONE HOLDS TWO. SHAKESPEARE SAID IT WELL IN HIS PLAY "THE MERCHANT OF VENICE." NOW I NEVER THOUGHT THAT WHEN MY TENTH GRADE ENGLISH TEACHER, MISS NANNIE BELL TEASLEY, INTRODUCED ME TO SHAKESPEARE WITH THIS PLAY, THAT I WOULD EVER FIND IT TO BE ANY REAL HELP IN MY LIFE. AND YET AS I STUDIED THIS TEXT, MY MIND WENT BACK TO THE WORDS I HAD MEMORIZED LONG AGO BY ONE OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY, THE LADY LAWYER, PORTIA, WHO UNDERSTOOD THAT

IT'S ABOUT TIME TO FORGIVE

JULY 17, 2011

MERCY ACTS LIKE A BOOMERANG. "THE QUALITY OF MERCY IS NOT STRAINED. IT DROPPETH AS THE GENTLE RAIN FROM HEAVEN UPON THE PLACE BENEATH. IT IS TWICE BLESSED. IT BLESSETH HIM THAT GIVES AND HIM THAT TAKES."

"BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY." IT'S NOT THAT WE SHOW MERCY TO GET MERCY. IF MERCY HAD TO BE EARNED, OUR THEOLOGY OF GRACE WOULD HAVE LITTLE MEANING. NOWHERE IN THE SCRIPTURE IS IT SUGGESTED THAT WE CAN BUY GOD'S MERCY BY ACTS OF CHARITY; BUT IT IS MADE ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT IT IS THE MERCIFUL SPIRIT THAT KNOWS THE MERCY OF GOD. JESUS DOES NOT SAY DO A MERCIFUL DEED IN ORDER TO WIN MERCY FROM GOD. THIS BEATITUDE IS NOT AN IMPERATIVE. IT IS AN INDICATIVE. THIS, SAYS JESUS, IS HOW THE KINGDOM IS. OUR TASK IS NOT TO EARN GOD'S MERCY, BUT TO MAKE ROOM FOR IT IN OUR LIVES. THAT'S WHAT I WAS TRYING TO SAY TO THE CHILDREN THIS MORNING. THE ONLY WAY TO GET CLEAN, REFRESHING WATER IN A DIRTY, STAINED CUP IS TO EMPTY IT OUT AND RINSE IT CLEAN.

AND SO IT IS WITH MERCY. EACH ACT OF MERCY OR FORGIVENESS FREELY GIVEN EMPTIES FROM YOUR CUP ALL THE FEELINGS OF BITTERNESS, DISAPPOINTMENT, ANTAGONISM AND RESENTMENT THAT SEPARATES YOU FROM GOD AND FROM OTHERS. I BELIEVE THAT

IT'S ABOUT TIME TO FORGIVE

JULY 17, 2011

WHEN WE SINCERELY TURN LOOSE OF ILL FEELINGS TOWARD ANOTHER OR TOWARDS GOD THAT YOU CAN FEEL A WEIGHT LIFTED AWAY. SOMEONE ONCE CALLED IT “THAT BLESSED EMPTINESS WHICH LEAVES ROOM TO BE FILLED.” THAT’S HIS PROMISE IN OUR LORD’S PRAYER – AS WE FORGIVE OTHERS WE ARE ABLE TO RECEIVE GOD’S FORGIVENESS. IT’S NOT SOMETHING WE EARN – IT’S A GIFT FROM GOD, BUT OUR HEART HAS TO BE RIGHT TO RECEIVE IT.

THE QUALITY OF MERCY IN OUR LIVES DEPENDS ON OUR SENSE OF THE WONDER AND REALITY OF GOD’S MERCY. IT’S A MERCY THAT REACHES DOWN TO US AMIDST OUR FEARS, OUR HATRED, OUR DESPAIR AND ACCEPTS US AS WE ARE. IT CAN HAVE THE SAME EMPOWERING EFFECT ON OUR LIVES AS IT DID ON THE CRIPPLE WHO SOUGHT JESUS’ HEALING TOUCH AND RECEIVED THIS RESPONSE: “YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN. RISE UP AND WALK!” YOU KNOW, OF COURSE, THAT WHEN JESUS HEALED THE SICK OR FORGAVE SINNERS IT WAS ALWAYS A ONE ON ONE MOMENT. HE DIDN’T STAND ON A MOUNTAINTOP AND SHOUT SO THAT EVERYONE IN EARSHOT WAS HEALED AND RESTORED BY THE AUTOMATIC MERCY OF GOD. JESUS SAID, “HE THAT HAS EARS TO HEAR, LET THEM HEAR.”

THERE HAD TO BE AN INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE. TIME AND AGAIN JESUS TOLD STORIES OF HOW PEOPLE MISSED THE FREELY OFFERED MERCY

IT'S ABOUT TIME TO FORGIVE

JULY 17, 2011

OF GOD. THERE WAS THE RICH MAN IN THE PARABLE WHOSE LIFE BECAME HELL – BECAUSE THERE WAS NOT COMPASSION FOR THE BEGGAR BY THE GATE. THERE WAS THE PROUD PHARISEE WHO MISSED THE MERCY OF GOD – BECAUSE HE HAD NO CONCERN FOR THE PUBLICAN BESIDE HIM BEYOND USING HIM AS A CONTRAST TO HIS OWN VIRTUES. THERE WAS THE MAN WHO LOST THE GREAT MERCY HE RECEIVED WHEN HIS DEBTS WERE FORGIVEN – BECAUSE HE RUTHLESSLY DEMANDED THE REPAYMENT OF A MUCH SMALLER AMOUNT BY A FELLOW SERVANT.

WE ARE MERCIFUL AND FORGIVING NOT TO EARN GOD'S FORGIVENESS, BUT TO PREPARE OUR HEARTS TO RECEIVE IT.

MANY YEARS AGO, A PREACHER FRIEND OF MINE, DR. KOWALSKI, PREACHED A MAGNIFICENT SERMON IN MY FIRST CHURCH, AND THEN OFFERED US SOME "P'S" TO HELP US REMEMBER THE IMPORTANT POINTS OF HIS MESSAGE. I CAN'T GIVE YOU SUCH A MAGNIFICENT SERMON, BUT I CAN LEAVE YOU WITH SOME "P'S" THAT MIGHT HELP YOU BECOME ONE OF THE "TWICE BLESSED."

THE FIRST "P" IS PRIDE. FOR IT IS THIS THAT SO OFTEN KEEPS US FROM REACHING OUT IN FORGIVENESS TO ANOTHER PERSON. SO PUT

IT'S ABOUT TIME TO FORGIVE

JULY 17, 2011

DOWN YOUR PRIDE AND WITH IT A LOT OF EXTRA WEIGHT YOU'RE CARRYING AROUND INSIDE. MAKE A LIST IF YOU HAVE TO. WRITE DOWN ALL YOUR OLD HURTS – AND THEN PUT A GOOD ERASER TO THEM.

THE SECOND “P” IS PEACE. SPITE IS LIKE A SPIDER – IT WEAVES A TANGLED WEB. EVERY SINGLE NIGHT, WIPE YOUR MIND CLEAN WITH THE SOFT CLOTH OF FORGIVENESS. AND WHILE YOU'RE FORGIVING, DON'T FORGET THE SPECIAL PEACE THAT COMES FROM FORGIVING YOURSELF.

THE THIRD “P” IS PUBLIC. WHAT YOU DO IN YOUR MIND AND HEART DO ALSO IN YOUR ACTION. THE MOST MEANINGFUL THING WE CAN DO EACH DAY IS BE KIND TO EACH OTHER. THE REWARDS ARE IMMEDIATE AND STARTLING. KINDNESS TURNS THE TABLES. IT MAKES HARMONY WHERE THERE IS DISCORD. MY GRANDMOTHER USED TO SAY “IT TAKES TWO TO QUARREL. IT TAKES TWO TO GOSSIP. IT TAKES ONE TO BE KIND.” SOMEONE WHOSE WISDOM AND HEART I BOTH ADMIRE AND APPRECIATE ENDS ALL HER EMAILS WITH THE FOLLOWING QUOTE FROM HENRY JAMES, “THREE THINGS IN HUMAN LIFE ARE IMPORTANT. THE FIRST IS TO BE KIND. THE SECOND IS TO BE KIND. THE THIRD IS TO BE KIND.

IT'S ABOUT TIME TO FORGIVE

JULY 17, 2011

THE FOURTH “P” IS PRIVATE. WHEN SOMEONE DOES SOMETHING THAT HURTS YOU, DON’T COMPOUND THE INJURY BY SHARING IT WITH EVERYONE YOU SEE. THIS DOESN’T MEAN THAT WE DON’T ALL NEED SOMEONE SPECIAL TO TELL OUR HURTS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS TO. TO HAVE SOMEONE SHARE AN UNBEARABLE BURDEN JUST BY LISTENING CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE. BUT DISCONTENT IS A LITTLE LIKE OIL. IT’S EASY TO SPREAD AROUND, BUT IT CLOGS THE PORES OF YOUR THINKING. REMEMBER THAT MERCY OFTEN BEGINS WITH SILENCE.

THE FINAL “P” IS PROMISE. THE ABILITY TO FORGIVE IS LIKE ANY OTHER TALENT – USE IT OR LOSE IT. WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF HAVING DIFFICULTY BEING MERCIFUL TOWARD ANOTHER, GOING THE EXTRA MILE IN ORDER TO FORGIVE ANOTHER – REMEMBER HOW FAR GOD’S PROMISE OF MERCY REALLY EXTENDS. REMEMBER WITH THE PSALMIST THESE WORDS OF FAITH – “SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE AND I SHALL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER.”