

Sermon: June 13, 2010
“A lot of forgiveness ... a bit of the Blackhawks”

Ever made a mistake? A wrong turn? Said something you should not have?
Really screwed something up?

A lot of us have probably made mistakes that are literally life-changing ... for us, and for someone else.
I'm not sure which is more difficult ----- being hurt yourself ... or doing something to hurt another person.
It all brings us to the focus of today's lessons ----- FORGIVENESS.

We all believe ... in some fashion ----- that “Jesus died for us.”
Jesus is a healer ... a forgiver ... he even brought people “back to life.”

The blind can see ... the deaf can hear ... the lame can walk.
Remember the story? ----- there is a huge crowd around Jesus. This one family is desperate to have their loved-one walk again. So, they get up on the roof-top and literally lower this man right in front of Jesus.
This is kind-of like cutting in line at a Blackhawk's rally!!

Jesus looks at him. The anticipation in the crowd is amazing ... will Jesus help him walk????

And what does Jesus do? ----- he says: **YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN!!**

We come here to see him walk ... not for his sins to be forgiven!@!!

Jesus knows the secret ... Jesus knows the man's spirit.

*When you don't feel forgiven ... when you don't feel worthy of God's forgiveness and love ...
when you've made mistakes and never hear a message of reconciliation ... when you've hurt someone or you've
been hurt by someone else, and you can never “let it go” ----- well: THIS CAN LOCK YOU UP.*

It paralyzes you.

It keeps you from walking and moving forward.

Jesus looks at this man ... he looks into his soul ... and he knows what it will take for him to walk again:

MY FRIEND ... YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN!!

Life may never be the same ... but it will be OK.

It's time to move on **so, get up and WALK!!**

My mom used to tell me ----- “Donnie, you need to forgive and forget.”

Well ... we don't forget. When we mess-up ... we don't forget. When someone messes with us,
we don't forget. **TO FORGIVE DOES NOT MEAN** to forget.

Forgiveness doesn't change what happened ... rather, it's the invitation **TO MOVE ON.**

It's the spiritual freedom **TO BEGIN ANEW.**

Sometimes we need to issue the invitation ... other times, we need to hear it for ourselves.

Jesus was killed ... he was delivered over to the “authorities” ... why? -----

BECAUSE HE DARED, AS A MAN, TO ISSUE THE WORDS OF FORGIVENESS.

The religious types thought only God could forgive sins ... so, when Jesus does it ----- they think he is
claiming to be God.

Well ... how are people ever going to feel and be forgiven ... if they don't hear God's words
from the mouths of people like you and me?

Think of our kids ... our parents and friends ... co-workers and nursing home residents ... students walkin' the
halls of the high school next door ----- forgiveness never becomes real for them unless they
hear it from the “likes of us.”

Yes ---- **GOD IS ONE WHO FORGIVES** ... but the message needs to take shape in us!

Hey, let's talk about something fun ---- HOW ABOUT THOSE BLACKHAWKS!@!!

Now, I'm not the hockey fan many of you are ... but this has been fun.

Friday was an "alleluia moment."

Two million people in the streets ... men and women in nursing home lounges ... workers listening on their factory radios ... someone getting chemo, watching on the hospital television ... the postal worker driving his/her truck ... the veterans in Manteno ----- for a few moments: THERE IS NOTHING DIVIDING US. WE ARE TOGETHER!!

It's kind-of like when a local veteran returns home ... or everyone gathers at Bourbon Street to raise money for someone in need ----- all the barriers are broken down ... we come together ... nothing can keep us apart ... IT'S AN ALLELUIA MOMENT.

It's the days AFTER the "alleluia moments" that are always the toughest.

*Sitting at the kitchen table, wondering how you can afford to send your kid to college ...

*Another phone call ... trying to connect with the family member from whom you are estranged ...

*Knowing you will spend the rest of your life standing up for the dignity and rehabilitation of your disabled daughter ...

*Working at night as a nurse's aid ... cleaning houses all day ... trying to pay the bills for your 3 kids ...

Yes, today the Blackhawks are the heroes.

Their scruffy beards, battered helmets, and willingness to let you touch the cup ----- "they are us."

Almost they have a million dollars and we don't!!

But just remember ----- EVERYDAY IS YOUR STANLEY CUP.

Everyday ... you have to put the puck into the net for those who depend on you.

Everyday we are called to raise ourselves up ... to raise someone else up ... so God's "word" can become real and make a difference in the way we live.

By the way ... HOW DO YOU MEASURE YOUR WORTH???

I've had to change my measuring stick over the years.

I used to measure my worth at the end of the day by what I HAD NOT DONE ----- the one phone call I didn't make ... the tasks un-done ... the mistake I made.

When you keep measuring your worth by what "you haven't done" ... well, you become paralyzed.

Then ----- at the end of the day ... we are never good enough.

THE MARK OF OUR HUMANITY ... is NOT what we haven't done ... it's what we have done.

That one speck of decency ... that one victory ... the one or two "right turns" you did make ----- this is what we leave behind at the end of the day.

The half-full part ... the good part ... the one good deed ----- this gives us the courage to get up and try again tomorrow. RISE UP AND WALK ... and together we'll face whatever lies ahead.

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