



Chaplain's Notes March 2002

Dear friend,

How are you? I hope you've had a good month overall, and that this Easter break will give you a good holiday if you need it!

But I was wondering, have you ever thought about the real meaning & significance of Easter? Beyond indulging in chocolate eggs & rabbits, it is actually a time in which we can remember just what God did for us so that we could be forgiven for our sins.

Forgiveness is such a beautiful thing, isn't it. And oh, how we all need it. When I look into Wayne Carey's face, I see he wants it. When I look at my life and what I've done, I need it. When I look around at the international world situation, I wish that a whole lot more people would be forgiving! Especially in the Middle East. It makes you wonder why so many religious people are fighting and warring. Why can't they just love each other? Don't all the world religions teach "Love your enemy"?

I think that one of the problems is the reluctance of people to first say "I'm sorry". We see that everywhere. Whether here in Australia, with governments being reluctant to say sorry to the Aboriginal people, or overseas, or in our own families, pride gets in the way and we find it hard to admit our own guilt.

But what a difference it makes if we do own up to our own guilt. Then the problem is no longer ours. It is up to the other person to forgive. Does that sound strange? Listen to the Lord's prayer, which Jesus taught us to pray, and how Jesus also emphasizes the importance of forgiving:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we also forgive those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

(Matthew 6:9-15)

Jesus is pretty strict, isn't he, when it comes to our responsibility to forgive. Do you know why? Because God has already taken the penalty for our sins upon Himself. When Jesus died on the cross at that first Easter, God took away the sins of the world and their penalty, and therefore no-one has the right to condemn or hold a grudge against another person.

Jesus said "Do not judge, or you, too, will be judged" (Matthew 7:1) and "If anyone is without sin, let him cast the first stone" (John 8:7)

But I have found in my travels that "hard" people find it difficult to forgive. People who have grown up in really strict households, have had abusive fathers or controlling mothers, who feel under pressure to be "perfect" or else they are rejected – people like that have never experienced forgiveness for their faults, and so they do not know how to show it. I feel for people like this. I had a similar background. But you can change. I did.

When I discovered that God loved me so much that before I even really cared about Him, He cared for me deeply and sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross for my hard attitude, rebellion, pride, and lust, **that knowledge BROKE** my hard heart and made me soft! That is the significance of Easter. Believing in what Jesus did for you on the cross SETS YOU FREE - I'm telling you from my own experience.

Forgiveness. Showing grace to people because God has been gracious to you. I hope that more and more of us will put this into practice, thereby not only making our lives happier, but making others happy, too!

God bless you this Easter,



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