

**11th October 2015 11am
St Stephen's, Canonbury**

Lord's Prayer Lk11:6 Mat 6:12 - Mat 18:21-35 & Col 3:12-15

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

After a break for First Sunday we are back at working through The Lord's Prayer. We are looking at the 2nd of 3 aspects to the Kingdom that is both here and coming. A Welfare State within us, in which we call God father; in which he provides just enough for our needs and asks us to share it; in which our relationships can be just right; and next week in which we learn to keep ourselves just under control.

1. What is being forgiven?

Early translators into English used the word trespasses, or debts but now sins. This can be confusing.

At a very young age I found that wherever I wanted to explore, I was confronted with a notice that read "*trespassers will be prosecuted*". Even though I could not read it properly, I was told that it meant don't go there! As a normal curious small boy that meant that the place must be worth investigating.

I should explain that we lived in a big house in a small village. Next to the house was the parish church which was wonderful for us children as we treated the churchyard along with our garden and farm which had a lake, as our playground. I especially liked learning to wind the church clock, ring the bells and climb the tower to see the jackdaw's nests. My adventures usually ended with the heavy hand of my father being administered to my backside. In the 1940's it was generally assumed that corporal punishment was good for boys.

This was very confusing as each Sunday in the church we were promised that if we forgave the trespasses of others then ours would be forgiven. "*Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us:*" [BCP after a General confession and Absolution or remission of sins]. That sounded like a good deal to me; as the youngest, and therefore the person who everyone picked on; if I did not retaliate then I expected that God would prevent me from being persecuted. But it did not seem to work out that way so I started arguing with God and that was the beginning of a long and healthy relationship.

My mother used to read to me from Winnie the Pooh and I discovered that I was not the only person to get confused about trespasses.

"The Piglet lived in a very grand house in the middle of a beech-tree, and the beech-tree was in the middle of the forest, and the Piglet lived in the middle of the house. Next to his house was a piece of broken board which had: "TRESPASSERS W" on it. When Christopher Robin asked the Piglet what it meant, he said it was his grandfather's name, and had been in the family for a long time. Christopher Robin said you couldn't be called Trespassers W, and Piglet said yes, you could, because his grandfather was, and it was short for Trespassers Will, which was short for

Trespassers William. And his grandfather had had two names in case he lost one—Trespassers after an uncle, and William after Trespassers. "I've got two names," said Christopher Robin carelessly. "Well, there you are, that proves it," said Piglet." [Winnie the Pooh chapter 3]

Since many translations use the word **sin** it is worth unpacking that a little. In the Bible sin broadly used to describe a deviation from the moral norm. More specifically from Genesis 3 onward, it is acting in defiance of God's rule. So we are asking that God will forgive us for the time that we act, as if he did not exist, doing, saying and thinking things that he would not approve and which **hurt** other people. That hurt can be physical, mental and spiritual.

2. How do we forgive others?

Forgiveness, or Grace is the undeserved generosity that is the hallmark of The Kingdom. Paul wrote to Christians a **Colossae** 3:13b "Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Our motivation comes from realising God takes the initiative in restoring relationships, first with himself and then with each other. But we have the responsibility for following through. Jesus ends the story of the unforgiving **servant** by saying "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." Mat 18:35. Treat your attacker as Justified. It is 'just as if' it had never happened. Easier said than done but it really works. If you can go deeper into reconciliation you need to listen to how the other party feels about the situation and be ready to explain how you feel without making judgements. (not - you hurt me but - I feel hurt) Only as we **give** forgiveness can we receive more.

3. Is anything unforgivable?

Jesus in his uncompromising way said "he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God." Lk 12:9 "Anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven." v10. This teaching is always contrary to popular religion. Speaking out about Jesus being the only way to God is as likely to get you in trouble today as in Jesus time. This boldness can only come from the certainty that death is not the end. And that comes from an understanding of the Resurrection of Jesus.

So when praying the Lord's Prayer, focus on getting your relationships just right. Ask God to help you listen carefully to people and remember that they are unique and precious to God **however you may be feeling** about them.