

20th September 2020 10 am Applying the Gospel to Ourselves

Talk by Roger Homes, Report on "Quiet Space" by Rosie Lee, "What Christ's forgiveness means to me" by Charlie Palmer, *This transcript is only of the talk (including readings), the report on Quiet Space and Charlie Palmer's reflection.*

Talk

[Roger Homes:]

Good morning everybody. Today we're looking at hearing and applying the Gospel to ourselves. And this is part of a series that we've been doing recently on looking at the Gospel. I'm going to read in a minute our first reading, which is from Hebrews chapter 9 verses 11 to 15. And after that I've asked Rosie to give a brief testimony about 'Quiet Space'. Quiet Space is where we've opened up the church building on a Wednesday and a Sunday for people to come in for private prayer, and it will be good to hear about what God's been doing through that. So first of all, a reading from Hebrews 9, and then we'll hear from Rosie. Starting at verse 11.

¹¹ When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. ¹² He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴ How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

¹⁵ For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

What Happens at Quiet Space

[Rosie Lee:]

Good morning. My name is Rosie, and I'm a member of St John's Church. And I'm just going to talk to you about Quiet Time and Space with God. We opened our church doors for private prayers on Wednesday the 22nd of July, and that still continues. So the doors are open on a Wednesday from 10am to 2pm and on a Sunday from 11am to 3pm. The value and power of being alone with God is priceless – it's priceless for me – just me and God and no-one else, and time to be with God alone; no sermons, no distractions, just time to have a heart-to-heart with God, to meditate, to reflect, to be at peace with God. It's personal.

I've been on prayer duty since it opened and there's been a couple of occasions where there have been some really true heart-to-hearts with people coming through our door. And I'm sure Andy Powell won't mind me saying, because we were together on a couple of prayer duties, and we can testify there were people coming in to us, people who were in need, people who are sad, people who are hurting, people who just wanted to have some real time with God in a church building and give thanks and praise. Amen! People who wouldn't normally come through our church door. T

There was one visit where someone came in with his dog. And he was allowed in to pray, and he talked to us for a little while. He said he wanted to come and speak to 'that Man'. And he was in there for quite a while. And he went over and

he reflected. And it was a true blessing because when he came out he just didn't want to leave, he talked about how he felt to us both. He talked about how he was touched. He gave thanks. He was appreciative of our church door being open. He was someone who wouldn't normally come to church or walk through a church door. So, amen for that!

There was also someone who came in and this lady said, "My calendar always used to be full. Lots of things on there. But now my calendar is empty." Boy, oh boy, and she wanted to come to the church to reflect, to have a one-to-one with God. Amen for that. No time is ever wasted when we spend time with God. Matthew 6:6 says,

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Jesus spent many a time in private prayer with God. He often went to lonely places and prayed. It tells us this for example in Mark chapter 1 verse 35 and also Luke chapter 5 verse 16.

I turn my thoughts on friends and family, our church and our community and reach out to you.

Time alone With God is priceless. Go on, try it. And finally, in Matthew 11:28-30 it's saying,

²⁸ 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'

May God be with you all, in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Talk continued

[Roger:]

Thank you, Rosie, it's always good to hear testimony about what God's doing.

So my first point then on 'hearing and applying the Gospel to ourselves' concerns Christ's eternal sacrifice. Many of you will be familiar with the Jewish sacrificial system, which is where animals were sacrificed to atone or pay the price for the sin of the people. And what would happen is that the High Priest would go into the Holy of Holies, which is like a special place in the Temple once a year to offer sacrifices. And this was known as the Day of Atonement. The fact that it was a regular occurrence every year showed it was only a temporary solution. But Jesus' perfect sacrifice was once and for all, offers eternal redemption or freedom or forgiveness for us. And you will remember, many of you, that there's a picture of the Temple curtain being torn in two from top to bottom, as a sign that the barrier between us and God has been got rid of. Interestingly, Jesus offered Himself willingly as a sacrifice, unlike the animals that were in the Old Testament. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says,

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

We can know God's forgiveness for our past sins, or wrongdoings, and we can know the freedom that results from that. Heather now is going to bring a second reading to us from Galatians chapter 6 verses 12 to 15.

[Heather:]

¹² Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.

¹³ Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. ¹⁴ May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.

[Roger:]

Thank you, Heather. So for my second point I want to look at the issue of circumcision, which was mentioned there in Galatians 6, and early Gentile Christians were encouraged in some cases to become circumcised to follow the Jewish custom. And Paul is at pains to say in verse 15 that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, only a new creation. You might recall that Paul actually opposed Peter on this particular issue in Galatians 2:11-16. And so they were saying to the new Gentile believers "Well, believe in Christ is fine, but you also need to do this other thing as well," as though somehow by being circumcised, that made them more holy. Mercifully for us men we don't have to go through circumcision. But I think perhaps there are some modern equivalents that we need to be careful of, that we don't fall into the same trap. You know we all like some kind of affirmation, don't we, or recognition, and yet we're told in Scripture only to seek the affirmation of God and not of man. Social media is full of boasts. I know in my own running club people post, you know, good times that they've done in particular races, whether they be virtual or actual, or whether they've done particularly long races. Sometimes we get a bit upset, we don't get many 'likes' perhaps for a post that we put onto Facebook, something like that. And we can sometimes be tempted to 'bigger' ourselves up, sometimes at the expense of others, to make comparisons, even subconsciously. I just wonder whether you've been put down publicly? It hurts, doesn't it, when that happens. We've got to be careful not to do the same thing to others. You know actually sometimes it might be tempting. We need to learn to see people as God sees them. And this calls for humility on our part.

One of my favourite passages in Scripture is the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector¹, in which, if you remember, the Pharisee said or prayed out, "I thank You that I'm not like that sinner over there. I fast, I give a tenth of my money to God." And yet the tax collector was so ashamed that he wouldn't even cast his eyes up to heaven. And Jesus said it was the second one, who was a tax collector, that went back home right before God.

In distinct relationships where we serve, you know, they must come at a cost to ourselves, helping those that perhaps can't repay, maybe the poor or the needy. I guess parents have to do this regularly. Part of being a parent, I think, is about putting your kids interests before yourselves, making sacrifices to help them. And I'm told that there's three phases of being a parent. The first phase is the nappy phase, the second phase is the taxi phase, and the third phase, which can go on for quite a long time, is 'can I have some money' phase. So those of you who are parents, maybe you can work out which phase you're in at the moment. When we give not as a parent, but generally, what is our motivation? Is it to glorify God and help others or is it to make ourselves feel better? Often we make comparisons between ourselves and others, in terms of the life that we lead, attendance at meetings and things like that. In John 21 verses 20-22, Peter looked at John and he said to Jesus, "What about him?" And Jesus replies, "Don't you worry about him, you just follow Me." It's like He was saying, to turn that around, "don't you worry about anyone else; you just get on

1 [Luke 18:9-14](#)

with your own life and let Me worry about that other person." And I wonder if Jesus is saying something similar to us, "Don't concern yourself about other people, just concentrate on your own relationship with God, and let God sort out the others."

A final point I want to make is that the Cross is offensive to people. And some people find the Cross offensive because it means that those people who have worked hard all their lives, who have lived moral lives, are as much in need of salvation as sinners, or people they perceive to be sinners. It seems somehow unfair that the thief on the cross should be allowed to go to salvation. It goes against our sense of fairness, of justice. People outside the church often perceive those inside it as being judgemental.

A story is told of a beggar that came to church. And he sat at the front of the church cross-legged, and people started to move away from him because he hadn't washed in days and he was dirty and he was smelly. And then the vicar came down from the pulpit, and he sat at the front of the church, next to the beggar. Interestingly, we're all equal before God: the vicar and the beggar. The Bible says that our righteousness is like filthy rags, that we should not boast in ourselves, but only in the Lord, that we should seek the applause of God and not of man. Jeremiah 9 verses 23 to 24 says,

²³ This is what the LORD says:

'Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches,

²⁴ but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,' declares the LORD.

When God looks at us, He sees not our sin, but He sees the perfection of Christ. Notice that it's all God. It's got nothing to do with us, our salvation has got nothing to do with us. And sometimes we can be tempted to think that maybe just a very, very small part of our salvation depends our own performance. That is not scriptural. What it's saying there is that it's all God and not even any small part of it is ourselves.

Finally, then, by way of conclusion, I've got a series of questions that I'd like to ask you, for you to reflect upon. And I'd like to close your eyes for this. And then once I've finished reading out these questions, we're just going to go into time of quiet. And then I'm going to finish off with a word of prayer. So, these are the questions I'd like you and myself to consider:

- Do we trust in God's grace alone?
- Is there a part of us that thinks somehow we need to earn our salvation? If so, we need to repent of this.
- God has forgiven us. Have we forgiven ourselves?
- Do we really believe God has forgiven us?
- Have we forgiven others?
- Do we make comparisons with others, 'bigging' ourselves up in comparison with them?
- Is there still a small part of us that would like to trust in our own good living, and good deeds, rather than Christ's work on the cross?

2 Corinthians 5 verse 17 says,

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come!

So I'm going to pause there, giving you a moment to think and pray, and I'll finish off with a word of prayer.

[pause]

Lord, I want to thank You that Jesus' death on the Cross has opened the way for us to have a direct relationship with You. Thank You for His one perfect sacrifice for us.

I pray that we wouldn't be tempted to try to earn our salvation. Thank You that it's all You, and none of it is us. Forgive us when we make comparisons with our brothers and sisters, comparing our lives with theirs, usually favouring ourselves at their expense.

Thank You for the Cross. Thank You for what it represents: Jesus taking our guilt and our shame, as One who was without sin, becoming sin for us.

Help us to see others, Lord, as You see them.

I pray this now in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

[Kim:]

Thank you very much, Roger.

To repeat 2 Corinthians 5:17 [NIVUK 2011]

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!

It is because of what Jesus has done that we can be forgiven.

What God's Forgiveness through Christ Means to Me

Let's hear what Charlie Palmer has to say – he's sharing a few thoughts with us on what it is to be forgiven.

[Charlie Palmer:]

What does God's forgiveness through Christ mean to me? Let's talk past, present and future.

- Because I'm forgiven, I can let go of past demeanours, embarrassments and mistakes.
- Because I'm forgiven, I can enjoy the present, without having to worry about messing up.
- Because I'm forgiven, I can look forward to the future without any anxiety.

Of course I can do these things but they don't always happen; there are always nagging doubts: "I'm not good enough." "I don't deserve such generosity." "Others are so much better Christians than me."

Here's an idea. When the doubts come, I'm going to say "Hello! I remember you. Would you mind waiting outside a minute, I'm busy being forgiven."

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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