

March 9, 2025

The Fifth Window in Jesus' House of Prayer

The Window on Freedom

“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.”

Matthew 6:12

WELCOME TO THE SALT CO!

Welcome those who are joining us online.

This is the HUB of Seasoned Adult Ministry. For anyone new...by SEASONED ADULTS we mean:

SEASONED AS IN...

Chronologically-- we've lived a lot of seasons of life

BUT more importantly-

Spiritually--- ...like when sodium and chlorine combined make SALT... by the grace of God, when we receive Christ into our lives, we become like THIS [gesture: one hand—two hands—joined together]

JESUS CALLS US THE SALT OF THE EARTH.

And this is the SALT CO (where we pull off the road to gather, AND share stories about how to faithfully navigate the ever-changing terrain on Route 60+; and Route 60++...and +++...

A place where we:

Re-fuelRe-charge

And sometimes even...*Re-tool*

SLIDE OF SEVEN WINDOWS

We're accepting Jesus' invitation to come see what He sees through, this is our theme, the Seven Windows in His House of Prayer, what we call "The Lord's Prayer".

Because we want to see what He sees, think His thoughts. It's how we can live and love like Him.

First Window opens when we pray "***Our Father in heaven...***" God our Father is full of glad-to-be-together JOY!

Second Window opens as we pray, "***Hallowed be Your name...***" When we hallow who God is we are like mirrors reflecting His glory out into a searching world, and His holiness that shines is... beautiful!

The third window opens when we pray for His kingdom coming, His will being done on earth as in heaven, right where we live! This is the window on new creation!

Last time we opened the fourth window praying for our daily bread= God's every day amazing grace for which we are thankful beyond words, is the window on celebration

SALT TALK

Now we come to the fifth window in Jesus' House of Prayer. This window opens as we pray,

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"

Matthew 6:12

Debt was a big problem. Most of the prisoners in Roman prisons were not criminals but debtors. Their families had to pay off the debt. When the revolutionaries took over the Temple in the start of the Jewish War (66 AD), the first thing they did was to burn the records of debt.

We can understand. We are a nation of debtors.

-The average American household has \$105,056 of debt. Mortgages make up about 70%. We carry an average balance of \$10,563 on our credit cards. The average American household owes \$32, 274 in auto loans.

-Gen Z (18-23) owes \$9,593

-Millenials (24-39) owe \$78,396

-Gen Xers (40-55) owe \$135,841

-Baby Boomers (56-74) owe \$96,984

-Silent Generation (75 and above) owe \$40,925.

Big in the news nowadays is the U.S. Gov't debt= \$36.2 trillion!

Jesus' prayer was radical! *"Forgive us what we owe you as we forgive others what they owe us..."*

Imagine what it would feel like to learn that what you owe has been forgiven!

-The Jubilee provision in Leviticus 25 made for the possibility of returning land that had to be sold to cover needs to the original owner because land represented their share in God's covenant promise. Same for those sold into slavery. A note in my study bible reads, *"There is no evidence that the jubilee year was ever observed."* Maybe Jubilee was (and might be today) an appeal to God's people. Can you think of situations when material debts might be forgiven?

The Greek word for "forgive" means to "release". To let go. Make a fist. Hold it tightly. Notice how you are feeling. Your blood pressure is rising. So is your heart rate. If you keep this up, you'll eventually break a sweat.

Maybe you feel the way this little girl feels.

<https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/photo/portrait-of-a-caucasian-girl-with-a-anger-and-royalty-free-image/1347588707?phrase=grudge&adppopup=true>

She has a firm grip on a grudge.

There's a saying, "*Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die...*"

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"

Matthew 6:12

Open your fist now. Notice how THAT feels; heart rate slowing, maybe breathing a little easier. The muscles in your hand and arm resting, relaxing. Now your hand is available for other things...

When I was an assistant pastor in my twenties one day when it was the just two of us sitting talking, I asked the senior pastor what he was hoping would come of his years of ministry. He looked into his folded hands for a moment and with passion in his voice answered, "*I just want to see people freed up...*"

I bet Jesus liked how he answered. That's why He brings us to this fifth window. Think about it, without forgiveness where would any of us be?

Thing is this window shines light in places we'd rather keep hidden. God knows what's there, and what it's doing to us, and through us to others.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn emerged from his time in a Soviet gulag with powerful insights into our true humanity. He wrote,

"The line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being."

Alexander Solzhenitsyn

A while back at SALT CO we spent some time understanding what happens in our brains when we hold grudges and resentment, when we've been hurt and everything in us wants to get even, or a little more than even. Remember? Our brains go into "Enemy Mode" -usually just for an episode that quickly resolves-- but sometimes can harden into an enduring grudge.

At times, the people we normally enjoy can feel like enemies- spouses, friends, children, parents, co-workers, and as scripture testifies...the body of Christ is no exception. Our Lord knew how great our need is for the light and the vista that He opens up to us in this 5th window.

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"

Matthew 6:12

The light that shines through this fifth window blends with the first four windows, of our Father in heaven's joy reflecting on any who turn toward Him like angled mirrors bringing the beauty of heaven, His rule and reign right here where you and I stand, on earth, to meet basic human needs, material needs like daily bread, *including our need for release from what has us bound up:*

- from the stories we have been telling ourselves that we're no good, worthless,
- from the heavy load of how we have failed, harmed others,
- from our own wounding, and bitterness and anger, our need for revenge

Look long enough, maybe it takes most of our lives before we begin to see it, that there is no other way for us to be freed up, sooner or later you see this fifth window casts a shadow in the shape of a cross...

This is why John was so direct;

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins he who is faithful and just will forgive

[release us] us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” |

John 1:8-10

The apostle felt this same urgency:

“So, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness [mirrors!] of God.”

II Corinthians 5:20-21

Jesus is in the business of freeing people up. Enjoy this clip from The Chosen. Watch all the ways this man is freed up.

VIDEO from The Chosen [00:00-05:10]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIBOmQ1PaMY>

Ask for ways this man has been freed up. Here is freedom from sin and all that means to him, for him, from paralysis, isolation. Jesus’ healing is always whole life healing, in mind, body, heart, soul and relationships.

Notice how Jesus’ prayer goes,

“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors...”

Notice that word is not “because”.

But AS.

Why? Being forgiven, and forgiving others is one thing. It is not possible to be truly forgiven, released, freed up the way Jesus frees people up, and not to have this releasing become our way of relating to others.

Jesus drives this truth home. Right after the tour through His House of Prayer He adds,

"For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Matthew 6:14-15

Peter wrestled with this. Once he asked Jesus, "How often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "***Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.***" Read "*whatever it takes*". Because the Lord knows forgiveness, blended with healthy correction is what holds us together. It's the only way.

We can put it like this:

We are FORGIVEN *FOR* GIVING

Jesus tells the story (in Matthew 18:23-35) about the servant who is forgiven an impossible debt by the king but then turns around and throws someone who owes him a small amount into prison. When the king hears of this, that servant has hell to pay.

John reminds us,

"Whoever says, 'I am in the light,' while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness. Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates another believer is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go..."

I John 2:10-11

I put in a Google search for images of forgiveness and found this:

A forgiveness evoking picture...

<https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/photo/bad-dog-royalty-free-image/110701858?phrase=forgiveness&adppopup=true>

Pretty well says it doesn't it? This puppy has done something wrong. He's guilty as charged. What are we going to do with this puppy?

Thing is people are way more complicated, aren't they? We are forgiven for giving, but what form should that "giving" take? It depends.

Maybe this is a good place to talk about what forgiveness is NOT. We went over this last fall when we were tracking with Dallas Willard's *Life Without Lack*:

BUILDING FOUR POINTS

The person who is released when you forgive is you.

"The person who has the most power over your life is the person you have not forgiven. That person holds you in bondage." Dallas Willard

1. Forgiveness does not require reconciliation with your enemy
 - It's a mistake to conflate forgiveness with reconciliation—they are NOT the same thing. Forgiveness does not require reconciliation.

Forgiveness is a pre-requisite to reconciliation—**but only where trust is re-established through trustworthy behavior experienced over time.**

2. Forgiveness does not require you to forget what happened
 You may never forget what a person did. But you may find you treat them differently because you've learned something about how they may have changed, something you didn't know about them before. Forgiveness frees us to seek their good from here on.

3. Forgiveness does not mean you stop hurting
-Instead, forgiveness is a choice not to punish or seek revenge. It is how we are released from guilt when we are forgiven, and how we are freed from seeking to get even, to seethe, to hold our hands as fists. It is to open our hands.

So this fifth window in Jesus' House of Prayer – we can see- opens on our *freedom*. Freedom from debilitating shame, guilt, need for revenge. *Freedom FOR becoming the kind of people* God can use in this world we find ourselves in.

Let's spend some time processing this.

TABLE TALK

1. Why is it that being forgiven by God and forgiving others are “one thing”?
2. Talk about the impact on you of taking in how in Christ, by His sacrificial love, has forgiven (released) you?
3. Without any need to name a specific person, have you had the experience of forgiving someone -even if reconciliation was not possible- against whom you had a grudge? Have you ever been forgiven by someone who held a grudge against you? What do you think made this experience possible?

WRAP UP

For many years I pastored in churches that included a prayer of confession we spoke together, followed by some time of silence to lift up personal confessions.

READ Psalm 51:1-17 and offer a time of silence.

After some personal time with the Lord I would say this,

“Who is in a position to condemn us? Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. If anyone is in Christ, that person is altogether new- the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new.

Friends, believe the good news of the gospel, in Jesus Christ we are forgiven!”

Thanks be to God!

WALK THE TALK (slide building these dates events_

1. 4/18 JTC- ushering teams, sign up to serve
2. 4/29 Reagan Library Dead Sea Scrolls- join us, sign up on clipboard- will be a cost
3. 6/14 Car Show- save the date hospitality
4. Next SALT CO is March 23.

Contemporary English Version

*Our Father in heaven,
help us to honor
your name.*

*¹⁰ Come and set up
your kingdom,
so that everyone on earth
will obey you,
as you are obeyed
in heaven.*

¹¹ Give us our food for today.

*¹² Forgive us for doing wrong,
as we forgive others.*

*¹³ Keep us from being tempted
and protect us from evil.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen*

BLESSING