

First Word - Do You Know What You are Doing?

The man on the mat never forgot what happened to him that day. And how could he ever forget the other words Jesus spoke to him? "Your sins are forgiven."

What must it had been like if this man were present at Christ's crucifixion, and he heard these words, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" Luke 23:34

Jesus is speaking to God and not to the people at the cross on that day. God the Son is speaking to God the Father. God is relational. John 1:1, 14 - The Word.. was with God. This phrase is of two personal beings facing one another and engaging in relational, intelligent discourse.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34

Forgive them. Why should they be forgiven? They should be forgiven because *they don't even know what they are doing.*

How much of your life are you spending trying to figure out what you are doing? So much of our lives can be summed up in three words: I DON'T KNOW. I don't know what I'm doing." You do things or say things or react to situations in ways that seem to scream out: I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M DOING HERE BEYOND MAKING A MESS!

No one is given an instruction manual on how to handle every situation and relationship in life, but what we do get is forgiveness. Why do we get this incredible gift of forgiveness from Jesus? Because Jesus knows us, and He knows we don't know what we are doing half the time. On the cross, Jesus' words remind us that we don't know what we are doing much of the time.

This kind of ignorance and cluelessness is what leads to God taking the initiative regarding forgiveness. 2 Corinthians 5:19 tells us what God was doing: "*God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself not counting their sins against them.*"

This is God's preemptive strike. A pre-emptive strike is when somebody else makes the first move before you even have a chance to do anything. On the cross, before we ever had an opportunity to confess our sins, acknowledge our sins and take responsibility for our sins, God made a pre-emptive strike loaded with forgiveness.

On the cross, Jesus unites God's forgiveness with our ignorance. That is good news! And it's interesting because many have been conditioned to think primarily about forgiveness coming in response to our confession and our ownership of knowing we did wrong. Let me explain.

The first place many people go to when they think about forgiveness has been 1 John 1:9 where it says, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

This verse is indeed truth from the heart of God. However, what Jesus says in Luke 23:34 took place well before anything we ever said or took ownership of in response to 1 John 1:9.

Do you realize that almost nobody in the Gospels initiated and asked for forgiveness from Jesus? Jesus knew that without forgiveness being the first word from the cross, there would be no FACETIME between God and humanity. In a sense, those initial last words we hear from the cross are first: "Hey, you're forgiven." Then, "Can we talk?"

The word "confess" in the phrase from 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins...", means: *"to say the same thing as."* Therefore, when we confess our sins, we are saying the same thing about our condition that Jesus already has been saying on the cross.

Confession is saying the same thing about our messed-up lives and then walking into the pre-emptive forgiveness that Jesus already set in place for us to experience.

We, not knowing what we are doing, is a FACT! It is not an excuse. However, it does have consequences that remain. We not knowing stems from trusting and acting on bad advice back in Genesis 3 when the serpent was tempting and lying to Eve in the Garden of Eden about the effects of eating the forbidden fruit. Do you remember the lie he tells Eve in Genesis 3:4-5?

"But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"

Translation: "If you eat from that tree, Eve, you will know what you are doing."

Remember what God already said just a few verses earlier in Genesis 2:17. "...for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

They bit the lie, and their eyes were opened. They saw that they were naked. And we bite into the lie and eventually, we come face to face with the cross as we have the same realization. We think we know what we are doing, but in the end, Jesus was and is right: **THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING!** Therefore, Father, forgive them. Father, forgive us. Father, forgive me.

The best thing "knowing" brings us is how utterly dependent we are on God for covering because we are so exposed and vulnerable in our sin-scribbled lives before a holy and magnificent God.

A great definition of forgiveness is: "Forgiveness is giving up all hope of ever having a better past." What Jesus wants us to understand from that first magnificent word from the cross is that we never are going to have a better past. It is hopeless to waste time wanting such a thing. However, what we can have is forgiveness and hope for a new present and better future.