

Who Am I...Forgiven and Free!

Romans 6:6-14
October 21, 2018

Monopoly is probably one of the most popular board games next to checkers and chess.

How many have enjoyed playing this game of greed? I mean what is the goal of the game? To obtain as much property as you can while trying to wipe out your family and friends!

There is a space on the board called jail! Anyone ever had to go to jail? I mean in Monopoly! If you happen to go straight to jail and not collect \$200 if you pass go, there are 3 ways to be freed from jail. You can pay \$50 and get out on your next turn.

When your turn to roll the dice comes around, roll doubles and you get out of jail free.

What's the third way?

To have in your possession a "Get out of jail free" card; either from the Community Chest card pile or the Chance card pile.

I have always played the game that if you are in jail you could not collect rent or hotel fees if someone landed on your property. In reading the official rules, you actually can collect money but you just cannot advance along the board till you are freed from jail.

Which piece in Monopoly do you like to be? I have always liked the race car! Who are you in Monopoly?

Lets go off the board and move into real life...Who are you?

Today we are asking the question, "Who Am I?" with the answer "forgiven and free!"

Unlike the game, we often find ourselves landing on spaces or scenarios in life where we feel imprisoned. Most often these spaces are created when we or someone else does something to us that causes grief, pain or even anger. We are hurt or we hurt someone else. The bitterness eats away at us. We want to wipe that person out.

We find ourselves in the jail of bitterness and revenge. There is no amount of money to set us free. There is no rolling of the dice to get doubles to free us. There is no "get out of jail free" card we can put on the game board of life to set us free. Some of us may be able to still collect but we find it difficult to move forward in life.

Who am I? Bitter, revengeful and imprisoned.

I would imagine most of us have found ourselves in this "jail" space in life.

How do we get out of this jail?

How do we become Forgiven and Free?

I want us to take a look at a person who found himself in this jail of unforgiveness and despair!

His name was Peter.

He was a follower of Jesus for three years.

The night of Jesus' arrest Peter watched where the soldiers took the arrested Jesus. As he was hanging outside warming himself by the fire, three different times he was approached and asked if he was one of the followers of the Jesus who was arrested and put in jail. (Luke 22:54-62)

Most of us have seen this story and know that three times Peter denied any association with Jesus. I want to read the one line that I had never focused on before in all the times I have played this scene in my mind:

"He went out and cried and cried and cried." (Luke 22:62Msg.)

"And he went outside and wept bitterly." (Luke 22: 62 NIV)

Peter was devastated at the sin he had committed. He had denied any association at all with Jesus!

Jesus is crucified the next day. Three days his body lays in a tomb.

All during this time Peter has imprisoned himself in depression and bitterness; unable to find forgiveness for what he had done. Maybe some of us have been in that same jail cell as Peter.

Jesus is raised from the dead. Peter had gone back to fishing...his old way of life before Jesus had called him to follow him.

Now lets get Peter out of the unforgiven jail cell. He and some friends had fished all night. Jesus, whom they didn't recognize, asked if they had caught any fish. When the disgruntled disciples said no he told them to cast their nets one more time. The nets filled with fish to overflowing. John realized it was Jesus and told Peter, who jumped overboard and swam to shore.

Jesus had a fish fry breakfast ready for them.

Now here comes the good part...the "get out of jail" free card!

Three times Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter answered, "Of course I do."

Each time Jesus called on Peter to go and do what He had called him to do...share His good news resurrection love with others.

Three times Peter denied Jesus. Three times Jesus asked him if he loved him.

No doubles rolled. Jesus forgave Peter AND Jesus freed Peter to go and live the life he had called him to live. (John 21:15-17)

Peter was forgiven and freed! He became the leader of the Early Christian church. He would proclaim the forgiving and freeing love of Jesus. (Acts 5:31)

That same Jesus meets us in our spaces of life where we have sinned or someone has sinned against us. We are imprisoned. We may even go back to our old ways of life before we were a follower of Jesus.

Jesus meets us in our spaces of bitterness and defeat.

He reminds us of not the "get out of jail free" card but "get out of jail free" cross!

3 Nails + 1 Cross = FORGIVENESS!

The 3 nails cross we wear and share is such a powerful image, reminder, of the forgiveness we have been given through Jesus' death.

His blood was shed on the cross for each of us who have denied him in our lives by thoughts, actions or words. He comes to us in our life and offers us his forgiving love.

Do you love him?

Forgiveness gives us a new opportunity to continue on in our lives.

We are not only forgiven but we are set free!

Free from what? The bitterness that binds us in chains of bondage. Forgiveness is the bolt cutter of the chains that bind our hearts to sin. We are freed from the anger and the spirit of seeking revenge. We are freed from the heavy burden of guilt we have carried for so many years! Jesus offers to carry that burden for us. (Matthew 11:28)

Christ has set us free. (Galatians 5:1)

He has set us free from the imprisonment of sin and a long list of laws and regulations of religion. He has set us free to live the life He has called us to live...the life of a child of God.

We are not set free to do whatever we want. We are not set free to play the game of greed and take advantage of others in our lives. We are set free to live out the love that Jesus lived out for us. A love of forgiveness and new life. We are to offer a love of generosity and serving. We are freed to lead others to this forgiving Savior. We are called to live our lives for Jesus, the life He has called us to live.

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians distinguished between the freedom to sin and the freedom to serve.

"You were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature, rather, serve one another in love." (Galatians 5:13)

We are not freed to do whatever we want because for most of us that would lead us back to that which imprisoned our hearts in the first place. We are set free to do what we could not do on our own...love others as Jesus has loved us...forgive others as Jesus has forgiven us.

Listen to some of these quotes about "forgiving and freeing others."

"Forgiveness is me giving up my right to hurt you for hurting me." ---anonymous

"Forgiveness doesn't change the past, but it does enlarge the future." ---Wm. Blake

"As long as you don't forgive, who and whatever it is will occupy a rent-free space in your mind." ---Isabelle Holland.

*"When we forgive we set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner we set free is us."
---anonymous*

How nice this all sounds. I don't know about you but I feel like the Apostle Paul when it comes to forgiveness...

"For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do---this I keep on doing." (Romans 7:19 NIV)

Sound familiar? We know we want to forgive but it is sooooo hard.

We want to be forgiven but what we did was soooo devastating.

Give up your right and forgive!

Get out of the jail of hurting yourself...forgive yourself.

Open up the future Jesus has for you by forgiving.

Don't let resentment or bitterness have free rent in your mind and heart.

Be free! Forgive!

One other quote on forgiveness that we really don't like to hear. It comes from Jesus!

"For if you forgive others when they sin against you, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." (Matthew 6:14-15 NIV)

Not what we like to hear from Jesus. If you don't forgive...go to jail...do not pass go do not collect \$200!!!!

If you don't forgive God doesn't forgive you!

What's the get out of this jail free card? Forgive!

Remember that one quote I shared earlier: *"When we forgive we set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner we set free was...."*

Who was the prisoner we set free from jail? Ourselves!

Forgiveness doesn't change the past. What forgiveness does is free us to live the present and future.

Forgiveness doesn't remove the memory or the scar. What forgiveness does is enable us to continue to live the life Jesus set us free to live...scars and all!

Who am I? A prisoner if no forgiveness is given.
Free if forgiveness is offered!

Who are you?

You know as well as I do that eventually playing the game of Monopoly will land you in jail. I don't think I have ever played the game and not gone to jail at least a couple of times in one game. The same is true in life. We will find ourselves in a prison of sin and unforgiveness.

Forgive and be free!

Don't deny your faith and love for Jesus as one of His followers. Rely on His forgiving love to forgive yourself and others. Free to live the life He has purposed and planned for you is who you are called to be!

Who am I? Forgiven and free!