

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2022**  
**Glynde Lutheran Church**  
**Sermon on Luke 22:54-62; 24:33-34**  
**Theme: “The God of the second chance, and the third  
and the fourth chance...”**  
**“Don’t ever give up in your faith!!”**

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***Introduction:***

Today, I thought that we would focus for a while on what God is like, and how He treats us, and how He wants us to live. Our theme for this morning is: “The God of the second chance, and the third chance, and the fourth chance, and...”.

***Part 1: Larry’s second chance***

In the book *Fatal Attractions* by William White, the book that I used a while back for the sermon series on “The Seven Deadly Sins”, there is a story entitled *A Second Chance*.

Let me tell it to you... It's all about Larry's second chance. It goes like this:

**Larry Perkins had the fresh-off-the-farm look about him, when he left home to go to university. Tall and muscular, and with a huge smile, Larry was admired and respected by students and faculty alike at the university. His dad often boasted about him, “Larry has never given me a sleepless night. He’s as strong as an ox and as gentle as a kitten”.**

**In his second year at university, though, Larry began to hang out with a group of students known for their wild parties. One night, when they were drinking at a party, a group of local lads came and started picking on Larry and his friends. Larry ‘lost it’ and got stuck into the local lads; he broke the nose of one boy, left a great gash on the face of another, and smashed the windows of two cars.**

**The police were called, and Larry was booked for assault and malicious destruction of property. The judge took into account that Larry had been provoked, but refused to condone Larry’s violence. The judge ordered that Larry have counselling and put him on probation. His parents were tremendously upset, and they and Larry’s whole family decided to tell no one about the incident. In the meantime, though, Larry had to live with what had happened.**

During the university holidays, Larry returned home where he got a job on a building site. Soon after, he began going with a girl named Monica Froiland, a girl whom he had long admired from afar. Anyway, things developed between them, and Larry told her everything about himself, everything that is except what had happened at the university party.

Despite all the wonderful things that were happening in his life, though, for the first time in his life, Larry had trouble sleeping. And he was frequently depressed. His mum suggested that he talk with his pastor, but Larry was too afraid to do that. "What will the pastor think", he said to himself.

Things went on like this for a while, until one day when he was back at university, Larry went to church with his room-mate. Though he only caught bits of the sermon, he was visibly shaken when the communion service began. He was certain that the phrase "given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins" was directed to him.

Larry's conscience was giving him hell. The following weekend Monica came to see him, and Larry couldn't hold it in any longer. The words came out slowly, but eventually and emotionally Larry unburdened himself to Monica.

Amazingly Monica smiled. She said to him, "I love you, and I have known all about this from the moment I started going out with you. My dad told me about what you had done, but he said to me, 'Like all of God's children, Larry deserves a second chance'". Monica said to him, "Look, I have memorised some passages about God's forgiveness of us. Can I share them with you?". She did that and she said to him, "I believe that when you have the past forgiven by God, past sins are wiped out, and that you can begin afresh".

Larry and Monica prayed for God's forgiveness. His life was changed, as he came to realise that his past mistake was forgiven, totally and utterly by God (p. 65-70).

Now, I know that this is a rather 'corny' story in some ways, and it is very Americanised in others, but it is a story that hits home with me, *and maybe it hits home with you.*

It's a story that I can identify with, because when I went to university in

'the big smoke', I make a lot of mistakes, mistakes that would weigh me down heavily and give me many sleepless nights, if it wasn't for the wonderful news of God's forgiveness.

The news that God forgives me and you for Jesus' sake is wonderful news. God picks us up, and says to us,

**"I forgive you, Wayne.... My Son, Jesus, suffered the punishment and the judgement that you deserve from me. Get up, know that I forgive you, and go out with my power and love and serve those around you".**

Our God is a wonderful God: He is the God of the second chance, *and the third chance, and the fourth chance, and so on!!*

### ***Part 2: Peter's second chance***

Our Bible reading for today tells us how Peter, one of Jesus' disciples and close friends, blew it in a big way. Jesus had been arrested and was being tried before the Jewish council. It looked like things would go 'pretty' badly for Jesus, and that quite probably his friends and followers would be arrested too. In *this* situation, Peter was asked whether he was a follower of Jesus.

Peter denied that he was. He turned his back on Jesus, so to speak, not once but three times.... On three different occasions, he denied that he even knew Jesus. He denied his friendship with Jesus on three occasions, just to save his own skin (*Luke 22:54-62*).

Imagine how Peter felt, when he realised what he had done. Luke tells us that Peter "went out and wept bitterly" (*Luke 22:62*). Peter was, it seems, completely and utterly overcome by guilt and remorse.

And, I guess too, that that was the way Peter was feeling a few days later on that first Easter Sunday: depressed, down, guilt-ridden, and probably sleeping hardly at all, *wondering as he would have been about whether God would forgive him for what he had done.* It is in this context that we have to read some of the most amazing words written in Scripture, words that are often brushed over in focusing on Jesus' resurrection appearances to *all* of the disciples.

I'm referring to the words of the disciples to Cleopas and his companion when the two of them return to Jerusalem to report that Jesus had appeared to them on the road to Emmaus. The disciples say to them: **"He has risen indeed! He has appeared to Simon!"**

The very day that he rises from the dead, Jesus makes a point of appearing to Simon Peter. Why!? We're not told. In fact, we are told nothing of the details of this appearance to Peter. We are told simply that it happened (*Luke 24:34; 1Cor. 15:5*). But surely it was because Jesus wanted to set Peter free from his guilt! Surely it was because Jesus wanted personally to forgive Peter, and personally to assure the repentant Peter of God's forgiveness.

Later on, John tells us in his gospel, Jesus re-commissioned Peter to be his disciple. Quite a while back, my wife, Jenine, went to see John's gospel being presented by a dramatist. One thing that she noticed at the time was the direct parallel in John's gospel between Peter's denial and his re-commissioning by Jesus. Not only do they both involve a three-fold action, *but each occurred around a fire, with Peter warming his hands around a fire in the first instance, and Jesus warming his hands around a fire in the second instance (John 18:15-18, 25-27; 21:1-19)*.

The story of Peter's denial and of Jesus' appearance to him personally, and Jesus' re-commissioning of him *in front of the other disciples* is a reminder to us that no matter how badly we 'muck' up, God is always willing to forgive us....

### ***Part 3: Our second & third & fourth chances***

Our wonderful God is a God who is willing to give us a second and a third and a fourth chance, and much, much more. Our God loves us, and forgives us for Jesus' sake.

Listen to what some of the New Testament writers say about God's forgiveness of us:

**Let us praise God for his glorious grace, for the free gift he gave us in his dear Son. For by the death of Christ, we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven (Eph. 1:7).**

**God rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us safe into the kingdom of his dear Son, by whom we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven (Col. 1:13-14).**

**If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us. But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right: he will forgive our sins and purify us from all wrongdoing.... I am writing this to you, my children, so that you will not sin; but if anyone does sin, we have someone who pleads with the Father on our behalf –**

**Jesus Christ, the righteous one. And Christ himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven, and not our sins only, but also the sins of everyone** (1 John 1:8-9; 2:1-2).

The forgiveness of God is ours, when we ask for it; it is ours readily because Jesus, God's Son, has taken upon himself the punishment and the judgement that we deserve (See Appendix re "The Tax Collector" in the Jesus' parable).

But you know, the good news of God is even better than this.... We are forgiven, we are constantly right with God, as long as we are clinging to Jesus as our Saviour, as long as we are crying out to God:

**"Dear God, have mercy on me a sinner". "Dear God, let the sacrifice of Jesus be for me!!"**

That is the prayer of faith.

Listen to what Paul says in this regard:

**For we conclude that a person is put right (Lit. "declared righteous") with God only through faith, and not by doing what the Law commands.... Now that we have been put right with God through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.... There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus** (Rom. 3:28; 5:1; 8:1).

Don't ever despair in life that you have 'mucked' up too badly to be forgiven by God! He loves you, and loves you so much that He sent His Son Jesus to suffer and to die for you, to take on himself the punishment and the judgement that you deserve. All you have to do is to cry out to God for forgiveness, and be assured that you are forgiven as you cry out to Him in Jesus' name....

As we ask God for forgiveness, God reaches out and picks us up. He assures us through His Word that He forgives us (*hold up my Bible*), strengthens us through this same Word and through the precious meal of His Son (*point to The Lord's Supper*), and sends us out to be His servants...

### ***Conclusion:***

Don't ever give in the struggle of life! Don't ever let your past mistakes weigh you down!

They've been taken care of: on the cross by Jesus!

Let God pick you up, and go on picking you up, and let Him empower you to follow Jesus in being a servant of those around you.

## *Appendix:*

And then there is the tax-collector.... In our society, representatives of the Taxation Department, generally speaking, are pillars of the establishment. We make occasional sarcastic jokes about them, but none of us would question their respectability. Not so, though, with the tax-collector in our story. As one commentator puts it:

**In Jesus' day, a tax man was a crook, a treacherous, despicable collaborator with the Roman enemy, who made himself rich by exploiting this fellow countrymen. Think of some provincial mayor in France lining his fat pockets during the days of the Occupation by licking the boots of the Nazis, and you get the feel of how Jews felt about tax men in the first century. They didn't make sarcastic jokes about tax men, they lynched them. They spat on them when they passed and they cursed the ground they walked on** (*Roy Clements, A Sting in the Tale, 101*).

Tax-collectors were traitors who worked for the hated Roman government, collecting taxes on goods passing from one area to another, and ripping people off in the process (*Wenham, 118*)

Jesus says in his story:

**The tax collector stood at a distance and would not even raise his face to heaven, but beat on his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner!'** (*Luke 18:13*).

The tax collector is overcome by an awareness of his guilt, and his shame, and he recognises his need of God's mercy and God's forgiveness. So he cries out to God:

**'God, have mercy on me, a sinner!'**

And Jesus finishes off his story by saying:

**I tell you that the tax collector, and not the Pharisee, was in the right with God when he went home. For everyone who makes himself great will be humbled, and everyone who humbles himself will be made great** (*Luke 18:14*).

The Pharisee receives nothing from God because He doesn't ask for anything (*Clements, p. 102*). He feels that he doesn't need God's forgiveness, so he doesn't ask for it, and he doesn't receive it. The tax collector, on the other hand, is painfully aware of his sinfulness before God. He asks God for mercy, for forgiveness, and because he asks, he receives.

Jesus tells us:

**I say to you that the tax collector, and not the Pharisee, was in the right with God, or literally “justified” , when he went home.**

The word “justified” is a word from the language of the law courts. It describes how the tax collector stood legally before God’s bar of justice. The word basically means to “be declared righteous”, or to put it in modern terms to “be acquitted”, to “be pardoned”. Just as a judge might acquit an accused person, so *Jesus tells us* God acquitted the conscious stricken tax collector, *simply because he came to God and asked Him for mercy and forgiveness....*

One final comment in regard to Jesus’ story before we ask ourselves what message Jesus has for us through this story of his: in Jesus’ story, the tax collector’s cry to God has been translated as “God, have mercy on me, a sinner”. But in actual fact, this is a fairly weak translation of what the cry actually was. The tax collector’s actual cry to God was:  
**“God, make atonement for me”.**

You see, in the original setting of this story that Jesus told, the priests out the front of the temple would have just sacrificed a lamb for the sins of the people. The tax collector’s cry, then, is not actually a cry just for God’s mercy, but a cry to God asking that the benefits of this sacrifice be for him. He is crying out to God, in effect, then:

**“God let this atoning sacrifice be for me, a sinner”** (*Bailey, 154-155; Clements, 113*).

You know, some people think that forgiveness is easy for God. It’s not. Listen to how one writer talks about God’s forgiveness:

**Some people think that forgiveness is easy for God. ‘Of course God will forgive me’, they say, ‘it’s his business’. Not so. It is dreadfully hard for God to forgive sin.... If he overlooks a sin, it’s as good as saying that sin doesn’t matter.... That’s why in Old Testament times there had to be an altar, there had to be a sacrifice.**

**That sacrifice was first of all a symbol of the seriousness of sin in God’s eyes.... More, than that, though: the sacrifice was a symbol of the penalty for sin. For as blood speaks of death, so sin demands death. No less a price is adequate to express the horror and the indignation of a holy God.**

**Forgiveness may be offered freely in the Bible, but never make the mistake of thinking it's cheap. The Bible knows nothing of cheap forgiveness.**

**Our tax man realised that. 'Oh God', he cried, '...let my sin be atoned for. I don't minimise the seriousness of my crimes. I don't underestimate the penalty they deserve. I see the blood, I know the cost. So please, God, turn you anger from me; be satisfied that a sacrificial substitute has died on the altar in my place. And so have mercy on me, the sinner' (*Clements, 113-114*).**