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Forgiven to Death

You belong to the triune God. Your life is bound up and held in the God of the cross and empty tomb. Your future is found there. In the God of dying and rising. Graves and gardens. You are connected to God who is ever in motion.

St. Paul says, “We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, *we are the Lord’s.*” That is who we are. Our life is hid with Christ- in God. A liberating life to live.

I was locked out. I could not find my keys. I started to think about where I would spend the night if I could not get into my apartment . One of the first things I did was call my landlord- and he was in Florida and I was in Minnesota so that did not seem helpful. Even though it is a common and small thing, it feels like time is standing still as you search for what you need to move on. After searching the car we started to think either I had locked them in the apartment, or they were somewhere on the ground. It was winter in Minnesota. Snow had piled up near the curb. How was I supposed to find a key there?

Maybe you find yourself in another kind of situation that you can’t escape or find your way out of. The keys that could open up a future for you seem lost, elusive, hidden, or non-existent. Your world is getting smaller and less recognizable. It could be a prison of your own making or one put up for you through no fault of your own. Sometimes this world traps people.

Joseph’s brothers are imprisoned by fear and shame at what they had done. Relationships fractured. The emotions run so strong the past had erected bars around them. Yet Joseph opens the door and sets them free. Fear no longer has dominion over them. The impossible happens. Forgiveness comes to them. They can imagine a tomorrow again. Possibilities. Resurrection. The blinders and bars are destroyed because of the act of someone else. In Christ you have been forgiven unilaterally. You are a new creation. You reside in a broad place.

As Robert Capon says about our parable, “The king responds to nothing that the servant has in mind. He ignores the nonsense about repayment. He makes no calculation. Instead, he simply drops dead to the whole business of bookkeeping and forgives the servant. Wipes the debt out. Forgets it ever existed (as our Psalm says) Does, in short, what the servant couldn’t even conceive of doing. And do you know why the king could do that and the servant couldn’t? Because the king was willing to end his old life of bookkeeping and the servant wasn’t. The

servant was so busy trying to hold together his own bookkeeper's existence—so unable to imagine anything even vaguely like dropping dead to it that he never even saw what the king had done. All he knew was that the heat, which formerly had been on, was now off.”

The key to resurrection? Unlocking freedom? Is found hidden in death. Christ's and our own. Hidden in plain sight in the center of our worship gathering. The cross. A death that we need not wait for or fight. This death that we experienced in baptism. A death that we are caught up in and invited to accept every day of our risen lives in large and small ways. You know the specifics for yourself.

We are being beckoned to undergo death by the one who stands on the other side with arms outstretched. In dying along with the King-- life begins to appear in the most unlikely places, situations, and around forgotten corners. Christ does his best work with places left behind and thrown away by the world. We know that death is the key to resurrection. Every time.

When we are forgiven we die to sin and the lies that we have to pay our dues or that our past is permanent. We die to the illusion of control- because forgiveness is a miracle that comes from outside of ourselves. It happens to us. This is an invitation to die to our need to be right, vindicated, defend ourselves or have our way. Our egos can be buried so life that comes to you as gift might take root. Death and resurrection is always better than what we would come up with.

Forgiven so recklessly-- all bets are off. Nothing and no-one can hold sway over you forever. You belong to Christ.

Forgiven people who joyfully die every day— letting go continuously, are dangerously free. Free enough to forgive others and ourselves seventy times seven. An act of power that only makes sense on this side of Easter.

One Lutheran pastor expounds: “Maybe retaliation or holding onto anger about the harm done doesn't actually combat evil. Maybe it feeds it. Because in the end, if we're not careful, we can actually absorb the worst of our enemy, and at some level, start to become them. So what if forgiveness, rather than being a weak way to say, 'It's okay,' is actually a way of wielding bolt-cutters, and snapping the chains that link us? What if it's saying, 'What you did was so not okay, I refuse to be connected to it anymore.'? Forgiveness is about being a freedom fighter. And free people are dangerous people. Free people aren't controlled by the past. Free people are not easily offended. Free people are unafraid to speak truth. Free people are not chained to resentments.”

Free people know who they are and can risk being part of this upside down work of God. Love that can move forward with a lightness that allows us to follow Christ into new ventures.

A liberating life to live.

With the help of Ole, I eventually found my keys. And we can find this one in our worship gathering. (The cross) No longer stuck, the future was opened again. They were laying in the snow, hidden in plain sight.