

## Do You Know What You did?

**Text:** Luke 23:34 (Reading: Luke 23:26-49)

In the movie Bruce Almighty, Bruce is told about his filing cabinet with contained all his thoughts and actions...

It looks like a small cabinet and he laughs at the size of it...till he opens the drawer which just keeps coming out...longer and longer and longer.

In shock he pushes it back into the cabinet...was that his life!

Ken Gehrels writes of a person who, in a dream, finds themselves in a room very much like Bruce did.

They saw endless files under different headings...a catalogue of his life

With horror he began to flip through the files.

The first to catch his attention was one that read "*Girls I Have Liked*".

He opened it and began flipping through the cards...

quickly shutting it,

shocked to realize that he recognized the names written on each one.

He randomly goes through many of the files, curiosity kept him looking

There was a file titled "*Friends*" next to one marked "*Friends I Have Betrayed*".

The titles ranged from the mundane to the outright weird. "*Books I Have Read*", "*Lies I Have Told*", "*Comfort I Have Given*", "*Jokes I Have Laughed At*".

Some were almost hilarious in their exactness: "*Things I've Yelled at My Brother*."

Others he couldn't laugh at: "*Things I Have Done in My Anger*", "*Things I Have Muttered Under My Breath at My Parents*".

He was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the record of his life...

Surprised by the content.

Was it that possible? Were they accurate?

But each card confirmed a truth.

Each was written in his own handwriting.

Each signed with own signature.

One thought dominated my mind: "*No one must ever see these cards! No one must ever see this room! I have to destroy these files!*"

He tries desperately to remove or destroy the cards...but found it was impossible.

And then the tears came...he wept.

He fell to his knees, crying out in shame.

He thought...no one must ever know that this room exists...

It must be locked up and the key thrown away.

But, as the tears clear, he sees Jesus come in and open the files and read the cards...  
He sees sorrow in the face of Jesus.

What a confronting dream!

It makes me think...what would my life look like?  
What file entires would find in my cabinet?  
How big would those files be?

The dream that this person had, the drawer that Bruce opens in the movie tell a profound truth about each one of us.

We all have drawers full of thoughts, words and deeds that we don't want anyone to see.

Thoughts of those files makes us cringe with shame.  
No one must know about those we have hurt, betrayed, compromised, or let down.

We could ignore them. Pretend these cards didn't exist.  
We could try and make up for their existence by trying to write other cards...  
cards of right things done.

But none of that changes the facts...these shameful cards exist.  
And they have damaged relationships with others.

These cards exist.  
And God has read every one of them.

Worst of all...these cards have damaged our relationship with *Him*.  
Poisoned it.

The wrongs we have done to others are considered as wrongs done to Him, their Creator and Heavenly Father.

Those cards hang as a weight, dragging us down and away from His presence.  
Away and out to eternal aloneness and darkness.

A huge tragedy.  
And there would be no escape, no way out, no altering the situation.  
We can't destroy the cards.

*We* can't.  
But, then - we don't have to.  
Someone has done it for us.

That's what Easter is about.  
That's what Good Friday is about.

On Good Friday I am reminded that I am a sinner, that I've broken God's law.  
I am reminded about the cards in my life.  
I am guilty... stained... convicted.

There is the temptation to ignore Good Friday  
because we want to ignore unpleasant concepts like sin, judgement, death, hell.

But the Bible is plain and clear in its message that Jesus died as an atoning sacrifice  
for sin,  
to make us right with a God who is pure love and pure holiness.

A God rightly angry that we have rebelled.  
But at the cross God's love and justice, his mercy and his holiness, intersect.

If you wonder about the loving heart of God then hear what Jesus has to say as he  
hung on that cross.  
Verse 34 "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

This wonderful statement of faith by Jesus says something about God and it says  
something about ourselves.

First, about ourselves.  
Have you ever wondered about the meaning of the second part of this first word from  
the cross, "they do not know what they are doing"?

To whom was Jesus referring when he spoke these words?  
Where can you draw the line?

Did He simply ask forgiveness for the soldiers who must do their duty and go through  
with the bloody business of crucifying Him?  
Can you limit His forgiveness that narrowly?

Or, did He also ask forgiveness for the priests, the scribes, and the Pharisees, whose  
jealous plotting had sent Him to the cross?

Did His cry include the crowd who yelled, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"?  
What about Pilate and Herod?

Can we, in fact, set any limits?  
Don't these words reach out to everyone in Jerusalem and Judea and Rome?  
Don't these words reach out to include you and me;  
some 8,000kms and 2,000 years away from the cross?

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."  
This is a word that includes all who have ever lived.  
It includes all for all need forgiveness.

This is what we believe about ourselves.

But this first word from the cross is also about the grace of God:

"Father, forgive them."

It talks about the nature of God and what he was doing for us when he sent Jesus to be there for us.

"Father, forgive them."

What is the basis for asking this?

Does Jesus expect God to forget about our sin?

No, of course not!

God's justice demands that sin be punished.

Does Jesus ask God to let standards slip, to look the other way?

No, of course not!

God does not change, He cannot change.

Does Jesus want God to simply shrug it off as no big deal?

No, of course not!

All sin is sin against God, His majesty, His holiness.

"Father, forgive them."

Jesus is on the cross when He asks this.

It is because of that cross, because He is hanging there in our place, that Jesus asks God to be merciful to us sinners.

We struggle to define exactly what Jesus' death meant and how it brings about salvation.

Our struggle is the exact struggle that the Gospel writers faced:

how to make sense of everything that happened.

From Luke's account, we find that Jesus' crucifixion was only one small part of the whole story.

The actual event is recounted in one verse, verse 33: "When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left."

This account is very matter-of-fact.

There are no in-depth details.

There are no graphic depictions of what happened to Jesus' body as he was dying.

Luke knows that his listeners will be familiar with what was involved in this type of death so he does not feel the need to go into detail about it.

Instead Luke placed more importance on the people and their actions and reactions.

Luke's concern for people's actions and reactions is evident in verse 34 which reads: "Then Jesus said, 'Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots to divide his clothing."

There is a long-standing dispute over whether or not Jesus' words in this verse actually belong in the text.

The sources are divided on whether it is authentic to the original text.

Elegant arguments have been made both for and against its inclusion.

And yet, the power of its message begs for its inclusion in the final text.

Jesus continues to embody the love of God that calls for forgiveness and reconciliation.

At the very moment of his death, Jesus shows his concern for all those around him, all those involved in bringing him to this very point of death.

Jesus, God with us, intercedes on creation's behalf to bring reconciliation with God.

Forgiveness.

Think about it: when you commit an offence against someone.

You hurt them, cross them, damage them or what belongs to them in a way that is undeserved, unnecessary.

Justice has been violated.

Restitution must be made -- if possible.

Punishment is rightfully in order.

But then the wonder happens...the one who has been wronged says,

*"I relinquish my claim on restitution. I let go of the desire for revenge. I release the need for punishment. In my memory I will consider this event as having not occurred. It will not factor into the equation in the future. It is done. Gone. Finished. I wish you well instead of wishing you harm."*

That is the miracle.

The miracle of forgiveness.

The miracle of mercy;

a gracious, undeserved miracle.

God's forgiveness of us...gracious, undeserved...and very costly.

Costing the life of God's son:

his death for our life  
his suffering for our freedom  
his sorrow for our joy.  
his condemnation for our release.....  
for our *forgiveness*.

In the movie Bruce Almighty, nothing is done with the sin file of Bruce...  
but in the dream there was a beautiful ending.  
The dream account which I told you at the beginning wasn't finished.

It finished this way:  
Jesus turned and looked at the dreamer from across the room.  
He looked at him with pity in His eyes.  
But this was a pity that didn't anger me.  
He dropped his head, covered his face with his hands and began to cry again.  
Jesus walked over and put His arm around me.  
He could have said so many things.  
But He didn't say a word.  
He just cried with me.  
Then He got up and walked back to the wall of files.

Starting at one end of the room, He took out a file and, one by one, began to sign His name over mine on each card.  
All he could find to say was "No, no," as he pulled the card from Jesus.  
His name shouldn't be on these cards.  
But there it was, written in red so rich, so dark, so alive.

The name of Jesus covered his.  
It was written with His blood.  
He smiled a sad smile and began to sign the cards.  
Quickly Jesus signed every card, placed his hand on the man's shoulder and said, "It is finished."

That name of Jesus is signed over the cards of our lives too!

Luke understood the importance of the freedom that forgiveness brings.  
In Luke's account much of Jesus' ministry centered on forgiving and tolerating.

His life demonstrated that all are welcome to be a part of the community.  
Jesus consciously looked to eat and talk with those who were excluded from the Jewish community.  
Jesus welcomed everyone just as they were.

This welcome without a requirement to change first allowed the people the freedom to be changed by God's love.

Luke understood the importance of the freedom forgiveness brings.  
That is why, in his account of Jesus' final hours, he included these words from Jesus:  
"Father, forgive them."

Luke knew that his listeners needed to hear this message of forgiveness and freedom so that they would be able to understand what Jesus' death meant and how it would bring them salvation.

Luke's message comes to us today to tell us the same thing: Jesus died to bring us forgiveness and freedom.

Jesus continues to ask God to forgive today on our behalf.  
He asks so that we will have the freedom to turn toward God and God's offer of reconciliation in Christ.

All are welcomed by Jesus into God's community.  
We are freed by God's forgiving act in Jesus to recognize how we have turned from God.

We are freed to change our ways and to return to right relationship with God.

Jesus Christ died so that we could live as forgiven people.  
Let us live our lives in joyful response to this amazing act.