

Have you ever tried to really believe that you were forgiven? I mean about something that mattered to you. I am sure that one of the reasons that forgiveness is a flabby word to us, is that we so seldom experience it. Either we use it about things we have done that we aren't seriously worried about in the first place.... and what we really mean is "Forget it!"

Or we find that it is powerless to cope with the things we have done that we are seriously worried about.... the things we can't forget.

Life and death are a strange mixture of each other, accepting forgiveness is a kind of dying. The way to know the power of forgiveness is to die.

..... (In the Radio Script We have a hymn here....

have one if you like)

The Good News in Jesus Christ is that God loves sinners.

We know that every attempt at the good life falls short; that everything we try to do to Justify our existence, doesn't quite come off; that all our striving after righteousness and life only increases our anxiety that we aren't going to make it.... so that we turn in on ourselves and say "I am going to quit trying" (choosing death) ... or we turn outwards in hostility, (another kind of choosing death)..We hate our jobs, our boss, the righteous, the evil ones.....

This makes it good news that God loves sinners; that God justifies our existence with his righteousness not ours; That our existence is affirmed as a gift - as a generous act of God - and not as an accomplishment of our own.

That It is because God loves me that I am somebody, IS good news indeed.

But of course there is a catch to it.

Let me read a few lines from a letter the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christian Church at Rome:-

(Romans Chapter 3 Verses 21 - 27a)

What becomes of our boasting? it is excluded

Here is the trouble with living by grace. I have to forego living by accomplishment. Here is the trouble with living by God's righteousness. I have to forego living by virtue of my own. Here is the trouble with having my existence affirmed by a generous act of God's love... I have to cease to be my own affirmation.

This is what is hard about being a forgiven sinner.. I have to let it be a matter of what God is, not what I am, that makes me acceptable. I have to appear before God empty handed, nothing to show, nothing to claim, no boasting.

Here we have a very radical thing.

Coming empty-handed is a lot like dying.

Boasting

Self affirmation

Self Righteousness

Self Justification

.. the giving up of all these ---

is a radical kind of dying... dying as my own savior, dying as my own creator.

To accept forgiveness is to experience this kind of dying. The reason we do not know the creative, liberating power of forgiveness is that we refuse to die.

Nothing more wonderful can happen to a man than that he is forgiven. The New Testament preaches that he is forgiven. His forgiveness is there for the accepting.. and this will require his dying.

You can see why the New Testament Faith is called a resurrection Faith. It is all about a dying to rise again.. Life in Christ is a dying and rising affair,