



build. plant. grow.
the word this week



advent



lectionary
reading

Cycle B

Second Sunday of Advent

Lectionary 5

Reading 1: Isaiah 40: 1-5, 9-11

This is the prologue of what is known as Second Isaiah. Isaiah wishes the nation of Israel to be aware that God is the one who brings comfort and **forgiveness**. In fact the key phrase to the entire prophecy is: *“Comfort, O Comfort my people says your God.”* (40:1) Second Isaiah prophesied an almost unthinkable message of hope to the captive Israelites: the time of exile was coming to an end. God had **forgiven** Israel of all of their sins, and was calling Israel back to the Promised Land. Israel’s long wait in exile, spanning two generations, was almost over.

Reading 2: 2 Peter 3: 8-14

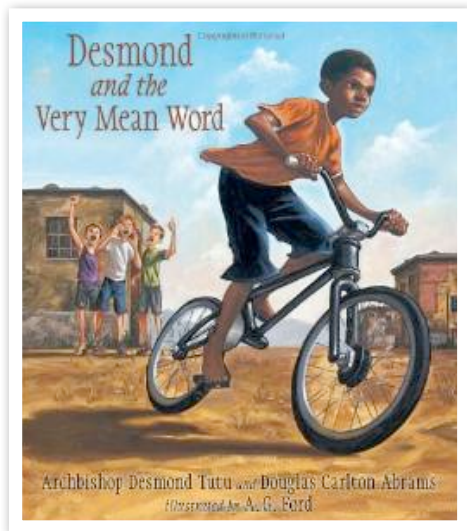
This letter from Saint Peter chosen for the Second Sunday of Advent continues the themes of patience and vigilant waiting. Saint Peter reminds us that *“the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night,”* so we are called to be prepared by living a good and holy life. An essential element of living a good and holy life is to be a presence of **forgiveness** in the world. We are called to be at peace and a crucial part of being at peace is to be **forgiving**.

Gospel: Mark 1: 1-8

This beginning passage of Saint Mark’s Gospel introduces Jesus as the Son of God and deliverer of Good News. This Good News is that there is victory over sin and death and that **forgiveness** has come into the world. Saint John the Baptist calls all to repentance and goes before Jesus, the One who will bring about **forgiveness** and the remission of sins. The Gospel of Saint Mark has **forgiveness** as the dominant theme of his account of the Good News of Jesus Christ.



children's story



Desmond and the Very Mean Word

Written by Desmond Tutu

Illustrated by A. G. Ford

Copyright 2012 Candlewick

ISBN-10: 0763652296

ISBN-13: 978-076652296



character
education
activity

Forgiveness is a process and it takes effort and much prayer to move beyond hurt and to begin healing.

Desmond and the Very Mean Word

When a group of white boys hurl racial taunts at young Desmond Tutu, he turns to his mentor, Father Trevor. The advice that Desmond receives is not exactly what he wants to hear. Father Trevor encourages Desmond to be **forgiving**, when in reality he would like to retaliate. Father Trevor's advice to Desmond is sound advice for all of us. Father Trevor put it this way; *"When you forgive someone, you free yourself from what they said or done. It's like magic."* The story concludes with **forgiveness** and quiet reconciliation between Desmond and one of his tormentors.

Activity

Step One: Explain to the students that when we enter into forgiveness we allow our hearts to be healed from whatever has hurt us. We also help heal the hearts of people who may have hurt us unintentionally. Explain to the students that they will be making a heart out of construction paper, break it, and then put it back together again in order to illustrate how forgiveness helps heal.

Step Two: Have the students cut out a large heart already outlined on card stock or construction paper.

Step Three: The students will then draw a picture of themselves or something that makes them happy on the heart.

Step Four: Have the students cut the heart into 10 or 12 randomly shaped pieces. They now have a broken heart puzzle. This is an opportunity to speak to them about how forgiveness helps heal, and put the broken heart back together again. Have them put the heart puzzle back together again. Provide the students with small plastic sandwich bags to store their broken heart puzzle and have them trade with another student to see if they can heal the heart by putting it back together again.

**Forgiveness is the final
form of Love.**
Reinhold Niebuhr



case study

**Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.**

What could you do today?

If you have a children's Bible at home read the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:15-31). Otherwise ask one of your parents or another adult to read the story to you. Make a list of all the characters in the story and see what you can learn from them about **forgiveness** or in some cases what happens if there is a resistance to **forgiving**.

Can you remember a time when you have forgiven or a time when it was hard to forgive? What did it feel like? It is remembering these stories about **forgiving** or not **forgiving** that we can have an opportunity to learn something about ourselves when we have been hurt and how we have responded. When we have some distance and time from the hurtful event we can learn more about what it means to **forgive** because **forgiving** is a process.

Look Feel Know Act

We often hear the phrase *Forgive and forget*. People often mistakenly believe that this phrase is from the Holy Bible, but it is not. It happens to be from William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The truth is the only one that is capable of **forgiving** and forgetting is God. Maybe a better phrase for us would be more like *Forgive and remember how much God has forgiven you*. It is very important for us to learn how to **forgive** others and also to learn how to **forgive** ourselves when we sought God's **forgiveness**. Remember that we cannot equate forgiving with forgetting. People do not have the capacity to do this, but God does.

The journey and the process of **forgiving** is a monumental task. In Archbishop Tutu's story, *Desmond and the Very Mean Word*, we see the struggle and process Desmond experiences as he enters into wanting to **forgive**. It is with the direction of his mentor Father Trevor that Desmond begins to understand the importance of **forgiveness** and that indeed it is a process. This story is a wonderful illustration of the **forgiveness** that is spoken of in the readings selected for the Second Sunday of Advent and indeed one of the primary qualities called for in living as a follower of Jesus Christ.



closing
tool

Pray that you will forgive and remember, remember how much the Lord has forgiven you. Pray that you remember that He has forgiven you because of the immensity and unconditional love that God has for you. Amen.



**Santa Clara
University**

Character Education at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics
ethics programs for communities that learn, live, pray, or work together

www.scu.edu/character