

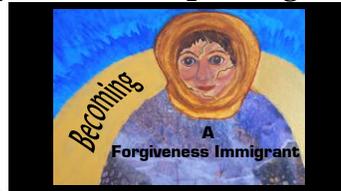
Becoming a Forgiveness Immigrant  
December 16, 2018 Advent Week III

**Rick: Introduction and Review of the series**

The process of forgiveness begins with a story...our own story... of what hurt us...and how we tell this story to ourselves and to others.

This morning, this 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent, we are taking you through the process of forgiveness by using Jill's artwork.

We are taking you through the process of opening doors and becoming a



"Forgiveness Immigrant". **Screen 1**

**Jill:**

The word immigrant, in our times today, can elicit a strong response...strong emotions.

- Artists use words and images to elicit a response. Their goal is to help those who engage the art to see something in a different way. Or to use a term we explained on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent...to "DIAL IN"

As I considered using art to convey the process of forgiveness, I remembered a poem I have loved for many years by Adrienne Rich called "Prospective Immigrant Please Note". (The poem is written on the door artwork on the north wall of the sanctuary and is printed in the booklet available for the art installation.)



**Screen 2**

Adrienne Rich uses the verbal imagery of a door. She talks about how moving from a fixed position and going to a different place ... a place ill-defined and unknown ... is like going through a door not knowing what lies on the other side. She says this movement of going through a door into

the unknown is like being an immigrant. Immigrants leave their home (a familiar place) for varieties of reasons. No matter the reasons, though, they travel through doors ... doors of boundaries and borders, doors of rules, prejudice, and danger. They leave the familiar and travel through many doors into the unknown because they believe that what's ahead can be better than what they are leaving behind.

PAGE 2



Screen 3

Adrienne Rich's concluding line in the poem gives us the insight that the doors are only doors. They offer no promises of a pain free journey, no promises of an easy journey, no promises of quick resolve to our hurt.

We become immigrants when we choose to go through the door... or in my way of using this imagery...when we choose to begin the process of forgiveness. To become a "Forgiveness Immigrant" is to leave a familiar place where we have settled in to a way of living with our hurt and have become as comfortable as we can. It is leaving well established beliefs we have about ourselves and others in regard to the hurt we have endured.

Our story of hurt and transgression, which is our truth about the way things are, may find itself colliding with the changes forgiveness demands, when we choose to go through the "forgiveness door". But the door itself makes no promises. It is only a door.

### Rick:



Screen 4

In many ways the process of forgiveness, this immigration, is a solitary journey. Time in prayer, time in thinking about our pain and then working to release it, time in just plain grieving about the way things are, requires hard difficult lonely work. It is like wandering in a dark forest where it is hard to see the forest for the trees.

This is where a faith community becomes important. If I have a fixed way of telling my story (which probably includes a firmly believed conclusion) there is little room for change or forgiveness. My mind is set. While we are feeling lost in a dark forest, a faith community, or even one person that values the process of forgiveness, offers a way through the darkness. In the telling and the listening, a new perspective can begin to form. Our set mind is challenged, and our forgiveness muscles grow.

PAGE 3

**Jill:**



Screen 5

Sometimes forgiveness comes fairly easily. If we learn the importance of having a forgiving spirit in the way we live, we build forgiveness muscles. These muscles help us when larger, more difficult trespasses come our way

However, even with strong muscles, even with a safe loving community, even with supportive relationships, being a forgiveness immigrant is not like being on a zip line. It is not fast...it is not thrilling...and you are not suspended above the dark forest. You are mired in all the darkness and all the muck.

The pain of the forgiveness process, the struggle of being a forgiveness immigrant, has an infinity loop built into its essence. At times you feel like you are traveling the same path of hurt and sorrow over and over again. You feel stuck in an emotional loop that will not resolve no matter hard you try to move beyond it.

**Rick:**

Over these 3 weeks of Advent we have talked about:

- What Forgiveness Is, and what Forgiveness is Not.

- Building the right type of muscle. Choosing to build up strength in having a forgiving spirit. Rejecting the muscles of anger, resentment, grudges, revenge, and hate.
- The importance of a safe faith community. A place to tell our story of hurt. A place where we are listened to and supported in our immigration through the door and into another way of seeing and experiencing our injury.
- Seeing forgiveness as going through a door. Seeing forgiveness as becoming an immigrant who leaves a fixed position and moves into what is unknown.

What else can help us on our journey?



Screen 6

PAGE 4

Throughout history people have worn garments that represent who they are and where they are going. An example of this type of garment is a “Pilgrim Coat” These coats were worn at the start of a pilgrimage and signified the intent of the journey. Symbols of each place of the journey were placed on the coat. They are visual reminders of the sacred places. A Pilgrim Coat is spiritual clothing.

Spiritual clothing has great symbolic significance and power. The Pastor who gives us counsel wears a clerical collar. Priests wear robes, Rabbis wear prayer shawls, Monks wear special garments and Christians all over the world wear a cross.

We all need to wear a symbolic “Pilgrim Coat” when we journey like an immigrant and move through forgiveness doors. The covering we wear reminds us we are not alone in this journey. Many have gone before us, many come with us, many will come after us.

Kintsugi



Jill: Screen 7

Kintsugi is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with golden lacquer. As a philosophy, it treats breakage and repair as part of the history of an object, rather than something to disguise or throw away.

Great pain that results from any type of injury breaks us physically, spiritually, and mentally. We become a broken vessel that leaks through the damaged places. We leak anger, depression, fear, and may lose hope in ourselves, and in God. We wonder if the broken places in us will ever be whole. We wonder if we will ever stop leaking. We wonder if the pain of the injury will ever go away.

The Kintsugi image I created is one of a forgiveness immigrant. She is wearing her pilgrim coat. She is embracing a large cracked vessel. She has pulled, untangled, and sorted all the cords and strands from her cracked vessel. She holds these untangled cords out for you to see and consider. The damaged places, the anger, depression, fear and lost hope, are repaired with golden lacquer. The damaged places in her are now golden. She embraces them, wears them, and she gives the story of her immigration to you. This forgiveness immigrant invites you, the viewer, to join her. She invites you to open the door and come through. She invites you to begin a forgiveness process... a forgiveness journey... she invites to become a forgiveness immigrant.

PAGE 5

Rick:

The Lord's Prayer petition "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" is translated in Aramaic as "Loosen the cords of mistakes binding us as we release the strands we hold of other's guilt."

These words are not just empty words to pour into our cracked broken vessels. This living prayer is poured into the Creator of the universe and into you. God is ever present in your forgiveness journey. Jesus goes with you in all the muck, in all the cracks and broken places. The Creator God journeys with you through all the dark forests, all the anger and confusion, all the fear. This is a living prayer. The Lord's Prayer opens a huge door of forgiveness, a place for the repair of your brokenness.

When the Creator God accompanies you, the broken damaged places in you are filled with God's golden grace and mercy mending the cracks in your being. Kintsugi is also defined as embracing damage by making something whole. Forgiveness fills the damage of broken relationships, reconciled or not. Forgiveness applies a golden mercy to all the cracks and breaks, and brings healing, peace, joy, and strength.

Kintsugi treats breakage and repair as part of your history, your story. Rather than disguising damage and painful wounds, the golden places transform them. Transformed, you then become a place of safety for other forgiveness immigrants to tell their story.

### **Rick: - Conclusion to the series**



This Advent season, this Advent time of waiting for Jesus to be born in us anew, we invite you to go through doors...doors of forgiveness and mercy. We invite you to be a part of a safe faith community... a community that welcomes the forgiveness immigrant in all of us... to live Kyrie Eleison... to become unbound and set free.

We invite you to find a safe person to tell your story...to be a safe person to hear and see the stories of others... we invite you to become a forgiveness immigrant.

Kyrie Eleison- Lord have mercy- unbound and set free.