Synopsis of the Armenian Meditation

 To Forgive and be Forgiven

 Matt. 6:12, 5:23,24

The other day I read the story of a young boy who was still the only child in the family and wanted to have a brother like some other children had in the neighborhood. When he expressed his wish to his father, he told him that he had to pray. And so did the child. He prayed for one week, nothing happened, prayed for one month, nothing happened, prayed for three months and seeing that God is not responding to his prayers, he gave up praying.

A few months later, his father wanted to make him a surprise. Took him to a hospital, where he opened a curtain, showed him a newborn baby lying in a crib, and exclaimed: Surprise! This baby is your brother. God has answered your prayers. Then he took him to another cell and showed him another baby and said, this is also your brother. Then he took him to a third section and showed him a third baby and said: This too is your brother. His mother has had triplets. The little boy said nothing and was silently thinking. What are you thinking, my son, asked the father? And the child said: It is good that I stopped praying after three months, had I continued to pray more, who knows how many more brothers I would have.

I have called today's meditation topic "To forgive and be forgiven." and the word of God comes to us from the best-known prayer in the Bible, that we pray every Sunday in our church here, even twice - once in English and once in Armenian by singing it. You guessed it. It is the Lord's Prayer, where we say: "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" Matt. 6:12. Also, let us read Matt. 5:23 & 24 where Jesus says: “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First, go and be reconciled to him; then come and offer your gift.

The Lord's Prayer is prayed most often by nominal and born again Christians. By reciting this prayer, we ask God to forgive our debts in the way we too are forgiving our debtors. If we closely look at the words, we say we forgive, not we have forgiven in the past, neither we promise to forgive in the future. The verb is in the present continuous tense. It means that it is our habit, and we want to remind God of our good habit if He has forgotten it.

In addition, we confess that we know very well the condition to be forgiven, that is - first to forgive our debtors and then ask forgiveness. Jesus's disciples had no objection for this condition to be forgiven, but the question was how many times had we to forgive the same person who repeats to offend us repeatedly. We know what Jesus answered - not once, not seven times, not even seventy times seven. That means that we should not keep a record.

Many times, we are ready to forgive our debtors if they confess their wrongdoings and ask us to forgive them, otherwise, we should not forgive them.

Sometimes we say that we forgave other people but not from deep in our hearts, yet, we are reluctant to restore our previous relationship with that person.

In Romans 12:19 it says: "Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.

Let us forgive and forget on our part and leave the vengeance to God to take the matter in his own hands. We have to be very careful to repeat the words of the Lord's Prayer saying "as we forgive our debtors and try to deceive God if we do not forgive others sincerely. It is better not to pray these words at all and enter into a more serious condemnation.

Let us suppose that we truly forgave our debtors, is it sufficient to be pardoned by God? I do not think so. Since we have expected a confession from our debtors, we, too, on our part, have to confess to others our wrongdoings. 1 John 1:9 says: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” Without admitting our sins there will be no pardon. And here comes the next question: To whom shall we confess. To God? To men? To the priest?

Confessing only to God is the easiest way we choose. In our private room, nobody hears about our sins. I think that is not enough. We also have to confess to the person and confess to all those who have known our wrongdoings to others. I know this kind of confession is the hardest thing to do, but it is necessary to be pardoned. During our confessions to God and to men, we have also to promise that we will not repeat that offense thereafter. If we confess to God and to men and repeat our sins knowingly, I believe we have not truly confessed in the beginning.

And the last condition to be forgiven is reparation.

If the nanny working in a house has stolen some money belonging to the house owner, and repents of her sin, confesses it to God and her boss, is everything over? I do not think so. She has to return the money she has stolen.

Some people have made forgiveness a very easy job. You go to church. The priest or an elder reads a list of sins men could have committed, and the congregation repeats after each sentence - "I have sinned against God" and you leave the church fully satisfied that all your sins are forgiven.

Some people take communion every Sunday for their sins to be forgiven. Taking communion is a privilege for people whose sins have repented and are already been forgiven. Some people are baptized so that their sins may be forgiven. Baptism is only for those whose sins are already forgiven but by being baptized they renew their promise to serve God and start a more dedicated service in a church or some other mission.

Benevolence is not for being forgiven from sins, it is a manifestation of already being saved. If somebody has not given his heart to Jesus, Jesus does not need his money.

All mankind is born with sins; everybody needs forgiveness from sin. Let us do it the right way. Let us be practical persons. Let us pardon each other truly, deep in our hearts and let us not give way to hate, vengeance, let us not make the devil happy.

A forgiving person will enjoy a happy healthy mind, body, and soul. All scientists believe that many physical illnesses, even cancer are the result of stress, envy, hate, and anger.

One way that the act of forgiveness may be associated with health relates to cortisol production. Cortisol is a hormone released by the adrenal gland during times of stress. Unforgiving produces hate and anger and raises cortisol levels that have negative effects on cardiovascular, immune, and brain systems and potentially increase the risk for diabetes, hypertension, immune system deficiency, and other illnesses. A forgiving person has better health and increased longevity.

Let us pray today and say: Dear God, you have forgiven my sins through Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross; I too forgive truly everybody, even my worst enemies. Help me to be a loving person to everybody regardless of his or her behavior with me.

In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.