

Sunday, September 13, 2020

15 after Pentecost, Year A, Proper 18

Introduction

In today's second reading Paul questions why we judge one another, since we all stand before the judgment of God. Yet we do sin against one another, and Jesus' challenge that we forgive seventy-seven times reveals God's boundless mercy. When we hear the words of forgiveness in worship and sign ourselves with the cross, we are renewed in baptism to be signs of reconciliation in the world.

Prayer of the Day

O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness. Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Readings and Psalm

[Genesis 50:15-21](#)

Joseph reconciles with his brothers

[Psalm 103:\[1-7\] 8-13](#)

LORD, you are full of compassion and mercy. (*Ps. 103:8*)

[Matthew 18:21-35](#)

A parable of forgiveness in the community of faith

First Reading: Genesis 50:15-21

After Jacob's death the brothers of Joseph begged for forgiveness for the crime they had done against him. You intended to do me harm, Joseph said, but God used this as an opportunity to do good and save many lives.

¹⁵Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" ¹⁶So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, ¹⁷'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves."¹⁹But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? ²⁰Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. ²¹So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Psalm: Psalm 103:1-13

LORD, you are full of compassion and mercy. (Ps. 103:8)

- ¹Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all that is within me, bless God's holy name.
- ²Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all God's benefits—
- ³who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases;
- ⁴who redeems your life from the grave
and crowns you with steadfast love and mercy;
- ⁵who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like an eagle's.
- ⁶O LORD, you provide vindication
and justice for all who are oppressed.
- ⁷You made known your ways to Moses
and your works to the children of Israel.
- ⁸LORD, you are full of compassion and mercy,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love;
- ⁹you will not always accuse us,
nor will you keep your anger forever.
- ¹⁰You have not dealt with us according to our sins,
nor repaid us according to our iniquities.
- ¹¹For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is your steadfast love for those who fear you.
- ¹²As far as the east is from the west,
so far have you removed our transgressions from us.
- ¹³As a father has compassion for his children,
so you have compassion for those who fear you, O LORD.

Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

When Peter asks about the limits of forgiveness, Jesus responds with a parable that suggests human forgiveness should mirror the unlimited mercy of God.

²¹Peter came and said to [Jesus], "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" ²²Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

²³"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow slaves saw what had happened,

they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

Prayers of Intercession

When I say, “Lord, in your mercy,” you respond, “**Hear our prayer.**”

Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence is held as we gather our prayers.

You welcome us when we are weak in faith. Uphold your church throughout the world; make it a place of welcome. Strengthen faith through Bible studies and Sunday schools, confirmation classes and youth ministries. Nurture new ministries of education and growth.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

The heights of the heavens show us the vastness of your steadfast love. Have compassion on your creation. Where human selfishness has brought ruin and destruction, we look to you to heal, renew, and redeem your world.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Make your ways known to the nations. Speak kindness to our bitter grudges. Settle our hearts when we want to settle accounts with violence. Bless our leaders with patience and wisdom.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Bring healing and justice wherever harm is dealt. Provide vindication for all who are oppressed. Free victims of human trafficking and forced labor; deliver all who are bound by debt. Feed all who hunger, and guard refugees fleeing famine, poverty, and war.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Teach us to forgive. Remind us that you do not always accuse us. Still our tongues when we are tempted to pass judgment and argue over opinions. Make this congregation a community of mercy for one another and for all our neighbors.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Our ordinary gifts seem small when we stand in your presence. Multiply the gifts we are able to offer to make them abundant, not merely enough, that you may be seen through us.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Hear now the prayers of our hearts as we offer them before you both silently and aloud:

Silence for the prayers of people's hearts

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Whether we live or whether we die, we are yours. We thank you for those who have showed us faithfulness, for the knees that taught us how to bow to you and the tongues that taught us to praise you.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Blessing

The LORD bless you and keep you.

The LORD's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The LORD look upon you with favor and [little cross here] give you peace.

Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

Thanks be to God.

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Prayers adapted by Interim Pastor Janet S. Peterman

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