

Lessons for The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost September 17, 2023

Psalm 103:1-12 ~ *David praised God for blessings to himself personally and to the nation.*

Genesis 50:15-21 ~ *Joseph forgave his brothers, knowing that God had used him in a plan for good.*

Romans 14:1-12 ~ *When we stand before God and live by His grace, we will not judge one another.*

Matthew 18:21-35 ~ *We can never match God's forgiveness, even if we forgive seventy times over.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: The High Cost of Forgiveness

Paybacks are costly, but forgiveness costs us even more. Joseph's brothers feared that he would pay them back for their wrongs, but when he forgave them, they owed him a greater debt! Because God in Christ has forgiven us all our sin, our debt of love is so great that we belong to him. Jesus' parable teaches that we have an obligation to pay back, not vengeance, but forgiveness to all who sin against us.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord, in your mercy you have good plans for me, sometimes hidden in adversity. Help me see how you bring blessings even through the wrongs I suffer from others. As I have known your love in Christ, let me be loving, even to those who do me wrong. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: The size of an estate neither increases nor reduces our responsibility. A person with little can be just as covetous as a person with much.

OFFERING PRAYER: God of mercy, listen to our thanks and praise!
Great and gracious are your gifts to us each day.
Fill our hands with gifts for those crushed down, to raise;
Hearts with love to share; and lips your words to say. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: Like the unforgiving servant, we plead for God's mercy, promising to pay back or make up for the debt of our sin. In confession and forgiveness, we glibly remind ourselves that God is merciful and forgiving. Then, without taking to heart the overwhelming magnitude of God's grace, we continue to hold grudges and demand compensation for sins suffered at the hands of others. Thank God, even that sin is covered by Christ's payment on our behalf! From that bank of grace, we may draw reserves to forgive those who sin against us, even seventy times seven times.

Questions to Consider: Forgiveness is free, but not cheap.

- Would Joseph have forgiven his brothers if he had not been able to see God's plan for him?
- When we accept God's grace freely (*after all, that's his job!*), what responsibility do we take on?
- Does our intention or motive factor into God's willingness to forgive?
- Where alone can you find the resources to forgive even seven times?