

Lessons for Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

February 23, 2025

Psalms 103:1-13 ~ David praised the Lord for forgiveness, renewal, and redeeming love, undeserved.

Genesis 45:3-15 ~ Joseph welcomed his brothers with forgiveness and told them about God's providence.

1 Corinthians 15:21-26, 30-42 ~ God's ultimate grace is the gift of resurrection life through Christ.

Luke 6:27-38 ~ With sixteen imperatives Jesus told how to become merciful by modeling God's mercy.

GATHERING THE TEXTS: It's All about Grace.

Through little acts of kindness, from not expecting the return of a loan to the sacrifice of a great personal debt, like forgiving brothers who intended murder, God's people are called upon to reflect the mercy of their God. Ultimately our neighbors will see in us the supreme grace of God who gives new life in the resurrection of our bodies through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus our Lord.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Gracious Lord, it is your pleasure to extend mercy to your people. Open my eyes to see every evidence of your undeserved kindness so that I may rejoice in your ultimate grace through Jesus. Then give me the will to share your love joyfully through acts of mercy toward my neighbors. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: We have received the great gift of life from God. The little things we give from our work-a-day lives are blessed by him to be acts of kindness to those who need to know God's love. As we show mercy to our neighbors, we become models of God's mercy, seen finally in Jesus' victory over death and the grave – his gift to us!

OFFERING PRAYER: Bless, O Lord, these offerings, these tokens we are giving
From the bounty of your goodness in our daily living.
Use these gifts to show your greatest mercy is forgiving. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: We usually think of grace as a one way action with ourselves on the receiving end. We want others to be kind to us, to like us, to do good to us, even when we hate, mistreat, and demand of them. We are more often than not, surprised as were Joseph's brothers, when someone forgives a great injustice we have done. And yet, God in his supreme sacrifice, gives the ultimate gift of grace by joining us to Christ's resurrection and giving us the assurance that because he lives, we too shall rise.

Questions to Consider: What is God bringing about through you life?

- How did Joseph pay back his brothers for their injustice to him?
- What has God done with the trophy of victory that is Christ's resurrection?
- What does it say about love when Jesus commands us to love our enemies?
- How do we learn to be merciful?

Bonus, page 2: Hymn: When our Voices of Dissension

When our Voices of Dissension

When our voices of dissension strike a selfish, strident chord;
when our monuments to glory take a toll we can't afford,
only You, Lord, can restore us by the sacrifice You made.
With one voice we preach the message that our ransom has been paid!

When the bricks begin to tumble from the turrets that we build,
grant us grace to use our treasures for the purposes You willed.
To Your service, Lord, recall us, in obedience to Your word;
make us witnesses who share the gracious peace that we have heard.

Holy Spirit, ever loving, calling many to be one,
fill our hearts with trust and mercy; keep us faithful to the Son.
Give us strength to face life's trials. Bring us comfort in our grief.
You have turned our hearts to Jesus; now in Him we have relief.

*– Gilbert A. Franke, 7/9//2014
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may be sung to Hymn to Joy, LSB 477*