

**St. John's Lutheran Church**  
**Aitkin, Minnesota**  
**September 13, 2020**  
**The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Order of Worship (Online)**

- P In the name of the Father and of the  $\text{I}$  Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C **Amen.**
- P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.
- P Our help is in the name of the Lord,  
C **who made heaven and earth.**
- P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,  
C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**
- P O almighty God, merciful Father,  
C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**
- P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the  $\text{I}$  Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

**Introit**

*Ps. 143:1–2; antiphon: Ps. 143:9*

Deliver me from my enemies, O LORD!

I have fled to you for refuge!

Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy!

In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness!

Enter not into judgment with your servant,

for no one living is righteous before you.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son**

**and to the Holy Spirit;**

**as it was in the beginning,**

**is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Deliver me from my enemies, O LORD!

I have fled to you for refuge!

**Collect of the Day**

P Let us pray.

O God, our refuge and strength, the author of all godliness, hear the devout prayers of Your Church, especially in times of persecution, and grant that what we ask in faith we may obtain; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

**Old Testament Reading**

*Genesis 50:15–21*

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died, 'Say to Joseph, Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your

servants." But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

## Epistle

*Romans 14:1–12*

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written,

"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,

and every tongue shall confess to God.”

So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

### **Holy Gospel**

*Matthew 18:21–35*

Peter came up and said to [Jesus], “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.

“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

**P** This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C** **Praise be to Thee, O Christ.**

### **Apostles' Creed**

**C** **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,**

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,**

**born of the virgin Mary,**

**suffered under Pontius Pilate,**

**was crucified, died, and was buried.**

**He descended into hell.**

**The third day He rose again from the dead.**

**He ascended into heaven**

**and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.**

**From thence He will come to judge the living and the  
dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,**

**the holy Christian Church,**

**the communion of saints,**

**the forgiveness of sins,**

**the resurrection of the body,**

**and the life  $\text{\textcircled{T}}$  everlasting. Amen.**

### **Sermon Text – Matthew 18:21-35**

**Theme – Forgive As We Are Forgiven**

**Matthew 18:34-35 – “<sup>34</sup>And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.  
<sup>35</sup>So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”**

Did these words at the end of our text frighten you? They should because none of us always forgive others from our heart. So very often, we carry a grudge, plot our revenge, or at least, carry bitterness in our heart.

We feel we have the right to do that because some sins against us are so bad or so numerous that we shouldn't have to forgive. Jesus addresses some of that thinking after he is asked the question "How often must we forgive?"

As Peter asks that question, he suggests that seven times might be enough. As we think about Peter's suggestion we should realize that perhaps Peter is being generous. Bible commentators suggest that the rabbis of that day taught that three times would be enough. You know, today we would say "three strikes and you are out." Of course, Bible time rabbis knew nothing about baseball.

In answering the question "How often must we forgive?" Jesus says that seven times was not enough. He said, **"I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times."** Let me tell you, though, by giving that number, 77, Jesus is not saying we should keep track of how many times we have forgiven a specific person for something. The point is, Jesus is saying that we are to "Forgive as We are Forgiven."

To make that point Jesus tells "The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant." As we hear this parable, it is important for us to understand the difference between the debt that the first servant owed the master and the debt the second servant owed the first servant. The first servant owed the master 10,000 talents; the second servant owed the first servant only 100 denarii.

To understand the difference between the two amounts it is important to understand how a talent was worth and how much a denarius was worth. One source that I looked at said that a talent was about equal to 20 years of an average worker's wage. A denarius, on the other hand, is said to be what an average worker would make for a day's work. Let me do the math for you. The equation for figuring how much the first servant owed the master is this: 300 days of work (remember they couldn't work on the Sabbath) x 20 years x 10,000. When I plug that equation into my calculator I figure that the first servant debt would be the

equivalent of 60 million denarii. Or to put it another way, the first servant would have to 200,000 years, (that's 20 x 10,000) before he would be able to pay back the master.

The second servant, on the other hand, would only have to work 100 days to pay back the first servant. That would be quite doable. That was not true, however, for the first servant. He had no hope of ever paying the master back.

So the master ordered that the first servant and his family be sold as slaves so that at least he could recoup some of what he owed. Within the context of this parable, Jesus is trying to teach us about our standing before God. Our sin has burdened us with a debt that we could never repay. We deserve to be sold, not into slavery, but into eternal punishment.

In the parable, the servant appeared before the master and **"fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything'"** (Matthew 10:26). It is obvious that the servant didn't realize how huge his debt was. Truth is, we don't always realize how huge our debt is to God because of our sin. Despite this reality, some people believe that they are able to work it off and pay God back. People who think that are in denial.

What the master does is hard for us to imagine. **"Out of pity for him,"** we are told, **"the master of that servant and released him and forgave him the debt"** (Matthew 18:27). No earthly master would do that! Only our Heavenly Father is that generous! In fact, what our Heavenly Father did was to pay the debt Himself by sending His only begotten Son. That Son, Jesus, would allow Himself to be beaten and nailed to a cross to pay that debt. Through Him we are forgiven.

After receiving such forgiveness we are told that the first servant **"went out ... [and] found one of his fellow servants who owed a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying 'Pay what you owe'"** (Matthew 10:28). The

way the first servant asks for repayment is telling. He assaults the man.

The second servant, like the first servant before him, asks for **“patience,”** promising to repay him (Matthew 10:29). The thing is: it would be entirely possible for the second servant to repay the first servant. But, even though the first servant had been forgiven a huge debt by the master, he was unforgiving.

We are told that when **“When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place”** (Matthew 29:31). These servants illustrate the grief that people in the church feel when they see others who are unforgiving, who are holding a grudge, and carrying bitterness in their heart.

What the servant did was also distressing to the master. We are told that he says, **“You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup> And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ <sup>34</sup> And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers,<sup>l</sup> until he should pay all his debt. <sup>35</sup> So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”**

Each of us owes God a sin debt that we cannot even comprehend. Nevertheless, for the sake of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God forgives a huge debt. The sins that our fellow servants commit against us pale in comparison to all the sins we commit against God.

The point of the parable is this: God wants us to “Forgive as We are Forgiven.” To help us do that we can pray to God for help. And we do that every time we pray these words: “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” God hears our prayers for Jesus’ sake. AMEN

☞ The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your

hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

C **Amen.**

### **Prayer of the Church**

Almighty God, as once You kept Joseph from evil and brought good from his suffering in Egypt, deliver us by Your grace so that we may learn patience in trials. Teach us to be slow to judge, quick to forgive, and steadfast in love for You and for one another.

Merciful Lord, You have shown great compassion to us; teach us to show such compassion to others, that we may welcome the stranger, love our neighbor in need, and be attentive to those new to the faith or vulnerable to temptation. Help us to serve the refugee seeking safety, and give us opportunity to share Your gifts with those who live in poverty and want.

Gracious God, bless those who preach and teach Your Word, and give the hearers willing ears to hear and willing hearts to learn the Scriptures well. Bless those now training to be pastors and church workers. Grant to all the baptized the aid of Your Holy Spirit so that, receiving Your Gospel with joy, we may share it freely with those outside the household of faith.

Mighty God, give wisdom and courage to our elected and appointed leaders, that they may pursue justice, seek peace and protect life from its natural beginning to its natural end. Bring an end to the threats of terror and violence among the peoples, and open all nations to the voice of Your Word.

Holy Lord, lead us to pursue reconciliation, that we may stand before You forgiven and united in faith. Give us unity of doctrine, and help us to walk together in harmony of life.

Blessed Father, You know our weakness of body and soul. Give to the troubled in mind Your peace, to the suffering relief, to the sick healing, to the grieving comfort and deliver the dying into

everlasting life. Hear us especially for \_\_\_\_\_ and also for those named in our hearts.

Giving Lord, all good things come from You. Open our hearts to be generous with the poor and to bring You the tithes and offerings You are due, that Your Church and all her agencies may serve Your gracious purpose and suffer no lack of people or resources to do the work of Your Kingdom.

Almighty and everlasting God, deliver us from temptation and the powers of evil, that we may be faithful unto death and receive from Your hand the crown of everlasting life. Whether we live or die, we belong to You, and we pray You to comfort us with this promise, that we may join the company of the saints on the day You have appointed and enter into the heavenly places to worship at Your throne on high; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forevermore. **Amen.**

### **Lord's Prayer**

- C **Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;  
give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from  
evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory  
forever and ever. Amen.**

### **Benediction**

- P The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look upon you with favor and T give you peace.  
C **Amen**

## **Acknowledgments**

Divine Service, Setting Three from Lutheran Service Book

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