

15th Sunday after Pentecost September 13, 2020

14th Sunday after Trinity Proper 19 (24)
Lectionary Year A – the Gospel of Matthew

Living the Lutheran Lectionary

A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.

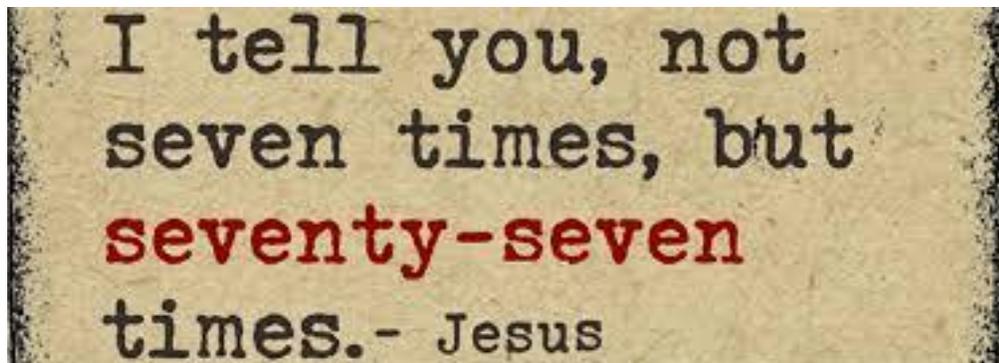
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.

Available on line at:

- ✦ www.bethlehemlutheranchurchparma.com/biblestudies
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Gather and be blessed:

- ✦ **Thursdays at 10 AM (5pm Kenya/Uganda):** At Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134 and on line through <https://zoom.us/j/815200301>
- ✦ **Wednesdays at 7 PM in a house church setting:** For details, contact Harold Weseloh at puritaspastor@hotmail.com
- ✦ **Thursdays at 1:00 PM (8pm Kenya time)** via Zoom to the Lutheran School of Theology - Nyamira , Kenya
- ✦ **On Facebook through Messenger** in a discussion group shared by people throughout the United States, Kenya and Uganda. Contact Harold Weseloh on Facebook Messenger.
- ✦



<http://catholicbb.org/home/blog/entry/reflection-for-the-24th-sunday-in-ordinary-time-cycle-a-by-fr-isidore-clarke-op-1>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 501 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) Not Listed
“Come down, O Love divine”

“Little is known about the author of our text, Bianco da Siena (c. 1350–1434) except for a collection of ninety-two poems entitled *Laudi spirituali*, literally, “spiritual praises,” or songs. These simple songs, sung in Italian, were composed by members of lay organizations of a devotional or religious nature. Apparently, members of such orders made promises to pursue poverty, humility and charity. Living a relatively long life of eighty-plus years in a time known for its wars and plagues could not have been easy by any means...

This hymn text overflows with action words (verbs) attributed to God the Holy Spirit, love divine — come, seek, visit, draw near, appear, kindle, bestowing —all in stanza 1...The action continues in stanza 2 as the fire of divine love consumes worldly passions and illumines our path. We live in an age that makes two common false assumptions: that people are basically good and that I can “decide” to become a Christian — “I prayed to ask Jesus into my heart.” How does our text overturn such thinking? Does it matter what hymns we sing? “Thy holy flame” recalls the Day of Pentecost when “divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them” (Acts 2:3)... Several hymnals omit stanza 3, which mentions things like lowliness, humility and weeping with loathing over personal shortcomings. While not painting a very pretty picture, our Lutheran theology has a certain grounding in reality that offers a blessing...” study by Paul F. Becker

- <https://www.lcms.org/worship/hymn-of-the-day-studies>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HPKL1wOVXk> “performed by the world renowned choir of King's College Cambridge and led by director of music Stephen Cleobury. Verse 2 is particularly charming as the male only first half breaks into a full choir fortissimo harmony for the second half.”
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLQu6_Tjk9M Fernando Ortega “Simple video with one stunning wallpaper and the words to the song.”
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_vqw_GClAY Performed by the choir of Riverside Church, NYC in a format common to the Covid 19 era.

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

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O. T. - “you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good”

Psalm – “ **Bless the LORD... *who forgives ... who redeems ... who satisfies you***”

Epistle – “whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's”

Gospel – “***Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to...***”

Genesis 50:15-21; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Exodus 14:19-31 or Genesis 50:15-21
(Next week: Isaiah 55:6-9; RCL, Exodus 16:2-15 or Jonah 3:10-4:11)

“Just when you think all is right in the world of Joseph and his brothers, their family drama reminds us that trust is very difficult to earn.

Genesis 50:15-21 contains the final scene of the Joseph novella, which began to unfold in Genesis 37. It depends deeply on the long story that has gone before, so some summarizing or contextualizing will be necessary when preaching from this text. The semi-continuous Old Testament lectionary includes excerpts from Genesis 37 and Genesis 45 on the ninth and tenth Sundays after Pentecost, but Genesis 50 is an option these many weeks later because its account of forgiveness pairs well with the same theme in Matthew 18:21-35.

This week’s passage reads like an epilogue to the Joseph story, almost an afterthought. Many years after selling their brother Joseph into slavery, the sons of Jacob have been reunited with Joseph and saved from starvation because of his position of power in Egypt. Their father Jacob has blessed his sons and died and a grand procession comprising both Egyptians and Jacob’s family have traveled to Canaan to bury Jacob there. Joseph and his brothers have returned to Egypt to live a life of privilege; surely all the drama of the Jacob cycle should be over...”

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2166
[Cameron B.R. Howard](#) Associate Professor of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

Chapter 50 Verses 1-14

God's Good Purposes Verses 15-21

¹⁵ 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.” ¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, “Your father gave this command before he died: ¹⁷ ‘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. ¹⁸ His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, “Behold, we are your servants.” ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people^[b] should be kept alive, as they are today. ²¹ So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

The Death of Joseph Verses 22-26*

- a. [Genesis 50:11](#) *Abel-mizraim means mourning (or meadow) of Egypt*
- b. [Genesis 50:20](#) *Or a numerous people*
- c. [Genesis 50:23](#) *Hebrew were born on Joseph's knees*

“Family harmony is definitely not one of the themes in Genesis.

Relationships between siblings are particularly fraught, beginning with the first sibling pair, Cain and Abel. In fact, the narrative moves directly from their birth announcements to jealousy and murder. God punishes Cain saying, “When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth” (Genesis 4:12).

As the ancestor stories begin with God’s call to Abraham, we soon discover that the founding families of Genesis are not immune to conflict either. In every generation, discord is the rule rather than the exception: Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, and then Joseph and his brothers...

...there is one last issue that has been worrying Joseph’s brothers. “What if,” they ask themselves, “Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?” (Genesis 50:15). In other words, now that our father Jacob is dead, will Joseph change his mind? Or, now that our father is dead, will Joseph show us what he really thinks?...

...So now the brothers come to Joseph, saying, “Your father gave this instruction before he died, ‘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” (Genesis 50:16-17).

What’s interesting about this tactic is that Jacob never seems to have said any such thing to the sons, at least not in what’s available to us in the text. And it’s not as if Jacob didn’t have the opportunity to do so since his final speech to his sons is both lengthy and detailed (Genesis 48-49)...

Whether or not Jacob made this statement to his sons is beside the point, though. The sons are clearly concerned about what will happen to them and they cite the authority that they know Joseph respects. In response, Joseph assures them, once again with much weeping on both sides, that they are indeed forgiven. Joseph addresses their concern directly, saying, “Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even 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” (Genesis 50:19-20).

Joseph’s statement is remarkable for a number of reasons, not the least of which is his willingness to place his brothers’ actions into the realm of God’s work! Joseph recognizes that even though they acted with ill intent, God used those actions for the good. This is indeed a gracious response.

This “extra” forgiveness/reconciliation scene at the end of the Book of Genesis is also significant to the larger story of the great family that began with Abraham and Sarah. Despite the conflicts throughout the generations, this scene brings the family stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to a close with the final word being one of grace and generosity. It also sets the stage for the Book of Exodus which goes on to tell a new story, the formation of a nation, the Israelites.”

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3429
[Karla Suomala](#) Independent Scholar, Richmond, Calif.

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 *"Men and women are granted little dignity in death in our cultural and technological age. There are hospital rooms with personnel continuously coming and going, tubes, tests, monitors and life sustaining (or death-prolonging) machines which make it difficult to even tell when one is really gone.

Jacob died in bed, at home, surrounded by those he most loved, and by those who most loved him. While most of us would prefer to die like Jacob, most may not have that choice. The need for very specialized treatment may force us to die in a hospital. And unexpected death may snatch us from those we love without any warning or opportunity to say farewell.

While the circumstances under which death comes may be beyond our control, our attitude toward death is something which we can determine, even now. I would like to suggest that few decisions are as important as our response to death. And no one chapter in the Old Testament has more to say on the subject of death than the final chapter of the book of Genesis..."

- <https://bible.org/seriespage/50-end-era-genesis-4929-5026> Robert L. (Bob) Deffinbaugh,
 pastor/teacher and elder at Community Bible Chapel in Richardson, Texas

Psalm 103:1-12; RCL, Psalm 114/Exodus 15:1b-11,20-21 or Psalm 103:1-7 (Psalm 27:1-9; RCL, Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45 or Psalm 145:1-8)

*Also used on the 7th Sunday after the Epiphany, verses 1-13 in the Lutheran Lectionary, Year C.
 The Revised Common Lectionary also uses it on Proper 16, Year C.*

"Psalm 103 begins as a shout. "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

It is an outburst of praise and awe from the center of the Psalmist. It is a cry of joy from the nephesh, the deepest well of the Psalmist's being. This shout then turns quickly to catalogue of blessings that God has wrought. Between the cry of thanksgiving and the introduction of the heavenly resume, the Psalmist lifts up a warning: Do not forget all of God's blessings...

Each verse of Psalm 103 contains within it an incalculable amount of stories. Stories when the merciful God showed up, abounding in steadfast love. The beautiful part about poetry is that it dwells in the in-between spaces of our lives. Our language is capable of such specificity, and yet, even with a vocabulary that grows with each passing era (what's a google?) we still fail to capture the full breadth of our experience. The wonderful thing about poetry is that it does not aim toward specificity but toward evocation. It combines words, images, and lines in order to evoke an experience that is outside the limits of our language. The beauty of Psalm 103 is not just in its recollection of God's good acts, but also the evocation of the feelings and stories that accompany those acts. Between each verse of the Psalm is a whole library of stories."

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2940
[Adam Hearlson](#) Pastor, Overbrook Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Bless the LORD, O My Soul Of David.

- 103 Bless the LORD**, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!
- 2 Bless the LORD**, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,
- 3 who forgives** all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
- 4 who redeems** your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
- 5 who satisfies you** with good
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
- 6 The LORD works righteousness**
and justice for all who are oppressed.
- 7 He made known** his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.
- 8 The LORD is merciful and gracious,**
slow to anger and **abounding in steadfast love.**
- 9 He will not always chide,**
nor will he keep his anger forever.
- 10 He does not deal** with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
- 11** For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
- 12** as far as the east is from the west,
so far does **he remove our transgressions** from us.
- 13** *As a father shows compassion to his children,*
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.
- 14** *For he knows our frame;^[a]*
he remembers that we are dust.
- 15** *As for man, his days are like grass;*
he flourishes like a flower of the field;
- 16** *for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,*
and its place knows it no more.
- 17** *But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting*
on those who fear him,
and his righteousness to children's children,

18 to those who keep his covenant

and remember to do his commandments.

19 The LORD has established his throne *in the heavens,*

and his kingdom rules over all.

20 Bless the LORD...

21 Bless the LORD...

22 Bless the LORD...

Bless the LORD...

- a. [Psalm 103:14](#) Or knows how we are formed

Psalms 103 and 104 in the Book of Psalms and Christian Theology and Life

Psalms 103-106 are a quartet of four hymns that wind up Book IV of the psalter. The two are closely linked, as the "Bless the Lord" frames of each indicate. The themes of these two psalms are complementary and offer a summary of what the Bible says about God. Psalm 103 tells of God who *delivers* the nation from bondage (7) and the individual from sin (10-13). God is portrayed as loving with motherly affection (4, 13) as well as with fatherly compassion (13). Psalm 104 speaks of God who *creates* and *sustains* all life. Taken together these two psalms express the themes of the Christian creed, speaking of God the *Creator and Sustainer* (104), God the *Saver or Deliverer* (103), and God the *Spirit* (104:27-30).

This is one of the most popular of the psalms, appropriate especially for times of gratitude or of repentance. It occurs frequently in the lectionary and has inspired hymns such as "Praise to the Lord." Especially attractive is the setting, "Bless the Lord," in the still-popular 1972 musical, *Godspell*. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZZulHI0X4M>)

And who can forget the sounds of all those bagpipes at public funerals in our day, sending out the central theme of this psalm, "Amazing Grace!"

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=655 James Limburg
Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

Romans 14:1-12; RCL, the same reading (Philippians 3:4b-14; RCL, Philippians 1:21-30)

"Paul began his argument in the Book of Romans by showing all men to be sinners, deserving of God's eternal wrath and without hope of attaining righteousness and God's blessings by human effort (1:18–3:20). After declaring man's sin and condemnation, Paul explained God's way of salvation in [Romans 3:21–4:25](#). God has provided forgiveness by sending His Son to die for our sins, bearing our punishment in our place. He offers His righteousness to us, so that we may enter into God's presence and blessings. We cannot earn this forgiveness and righteousness; we can only receive it as a gift, by faith, by trusting in Jesus as our Savior. As Christians, we now have hope—the hope of our future blessing and even a hope in the midst of present suffering and distress. We have this hope knowing that all the adverse effects of Adam's sin have been overruled and overcome by Jesus Christ..."

- <https://bible.org/seriespage/love-and-liberty-liberties-love-won%E2%80%99t-take-romans-14-23> Robert L. (Bob) Deffinbaugh... pastor/teacher and elder at Community Bible Chapel in Richardson, Texas

"Paul begins Romans 14 by speaking of the "weak in faith" and in 15:1 he urges "we who are strong" to "put up with the failings of the weak."

Arland Hultgren is probably right to conclude that Paul does not use "strong" and "weak" to define particular groups of people in Rome.

Instead, Paul is clarifying his thinking about food and festivals for Christians who do not know him, and who may have heard that he "went off" on Peter for withdrawing from table fellowship with gentiles (cf. Galatians 2:11-14) and that he voiced strong opposition to the Galatians observing "special days, and months, and seasons, and years" (Galatians 4:10). The advice Paul offers here is calmer and more considered in tone.

If we did not know the Galatians passages, it would be easy to read Romans 14 and think, "Food and festivals: so what?" In Romans, Paul offers the advice that people should welcome one another and not judge different convictions. Good advice, we think, but the issues he mentions seems so much smaller than the issues we struggle with: how to define ethical and moral sexual relationships, whether the wars we are fighting are just, what the arrival of new immigrants means for our communities, churches and nation..." (continued after the reading)

Do Not Pass Judgment on One Another Verses 1-12

14 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. **2** One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. **3** 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. **4** Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master^[a] that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

5 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. **6** 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. **7** For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. **8** For 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. **9** For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

¹⁰ 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; ¹¹ for it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess^[b] to God.” Cited from Isa. 45:23

¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Do Not Cause Another to Stumble Verses 13-23

- a. [Romans 14:4](#) Or *lord*
- b. [Romans 14:11](#) Or *shall give praise*
- c. [Romans 14:21](#) Some manuscripts add *or be hindered or be weakened*
- d. [Romans 14:23](#) Some manuscripts insert here [16:25–27](#)

“Paul provides three reasons for the advice to bear with those who think and act differently from oneself on matters of belief and practice. First, what people are doing, they are doing "in honor of the Lord" (14:6). Even though their practice may seem silly or just plain wrong to others of the same faith, when people eat or abstain, when they observe a day or ignore it, they are nonetheless seeking by their actions to honor the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's second reason is related to the first. Christians bear with one another not only because all are trying by their actions to honor Christ but also because Christ is, in fact, Lord of all, all the time. Even if Romans 14:1-6 seems to be discussing trivial things, Romans 14:7-9 cannot be. "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, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living" (verses 8-9).

Christ died and rose in order to create community across the most fundamental of differences: Jew/Greek, slave/free, dead/living! The acknowledgement that Jesus is Lord implies a critique of all other powers, even the power of our most thoughtful, considered judgment on how to honor our Lord.

Paul's third reason for bearing with those whose practice differs from ours is that God is judge of all of us, and one judge is enough. We are not judges of each other. In contemporary American culture, this text, as well as Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount, "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged" (Matthew 7:1), are often taken to mean that all behavior is equally ethical, but neither text says such a thing.

In the film, *Jesus of Montreal*, when Daniel is explaining to his court-appointed psychiatrist why he made a whip of electrical cords and drove leering TV commercial producers from an audition they were shooting, he explains that he was reacting against the way the men disrespected the women they were auditioning. "I don't like contempt," he says.

The judgment forbidden in Romans 14 and Matthew 7 is the easy, contemptuous dismissal of those who do not believe like us, or vote like us, or live like us. They are fools, we think, and we see no contradiction between our being Christian and our despising of them (cf. Romans 10b).

Paul says no to such despising, as Jesus had. In Romans 14:17-19, Paul offers his alternative vision of Christian community. Given that these verses are nowhere in the Revised Common Lectionary, preachers of Romans 14:1-8 may want to work with later verses in the chapter as well. In verse 17, Paul observes, "For the Kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." With the gifts of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit, the church can abide a lot of disagreement over many other things..."

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1072
[Mary Hinkle Shore](#) Rector and Dean, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, S.C.

Matthew 18:21-35; RCL, the same reading (Matthew 20:1-16; RCL, the same reading)

Note well! In today's Gospel it was Peter who raised the 'catch question' of the Rabbis, 'How many times must I forgive someone?' Peter, to his credit, suggested seven times – that's more than twice as much as the Rabbis required! That, he must have thought, would be more than enough, and Jesus should certainly be satisfied.

Surely Peter was speaking for each of us! After all, when someone repeatedly harms us, say, with a cruel word, and then asks to be forgiven we must wonder whether his sorrow is genuine. We argue that if it were, he would surely mend his ways, and stop hurting us. Eventually we may come to the point when we say, "I've given you more than enough chances and you haven't taken them. You're seeing my willingness to forgive as a sign of weakness. Well, I'm taking no more!"..."

- <http://catholicbb.org/home/blog/entry/reflection-for-the-24th-sunday-in-ordinary-time-cycle-a-by-fr-isidore-clarke-op-1> Fr. Isidore, OP*, Diocese of Bridgetown, Barbados
*Members of the order, who are referred to as *Dominicans*, generally carry the letters *OP* after their names, standing for *Ordinis Praedicatorum*, meaning of the *Order of Preachers*.

“The Holy Gospel beginning in the 18th Chapter of St. Matthew”

Who Is the Greatest? Verses 1-6 *Rank in the Kingdom**

Temptations to Sin Verses 7-9 *Stumbling Blocks* *

The Parable of the Lost Sheep Verses 10-14

If Your Brother Sins Against You Verses 15-20 *Discipline and Prayer**

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant Verses 21-35 (Proper 19)

²¹ Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, **“I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.**

²³ “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.^[a] ²⁴ When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.^[b] ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ So the servant^[c] fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii,^[d] and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ 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. ³² Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers,^[e] until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

- a. [Matthew 18:23](#) Or *bondservants*; also verses [28](#), [31](#)
- b. [Matthew 18:24](#) A *talent* was a monetary unit worth about twenty years' wages for a laborer
- c. [Matthew 18:26](#) Or *bondservant*; also verses [27](#), [28](#), [29](#), [32](#), [33](#)
- d. [Matthew 18:28](#) A *denarius* was a day's wage for a laborer
- e. [Matthew 18:34](#) Greek *torturers*

*Section titles and footnotes in New American Standard Bible

1. [Matthew 18:23](#) Lit *was compared to*
2. [Matthew 18:24](#) A talent was worth more than fifteen years' wages of a laborer
3. [Matthew 18:25](#) Or *was unable to*
4. [Matthew 18:27](#) Or *loan*
5. [Matthew 18:28](#) The denarius was a day's wages
6. [Matthew 18:30](#) Lit *but*
7. [Matthew 18:35](#) Lit *your hearts*

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

“This is one of the hardest parables we’ll ever preach on. Actually, that’s not quite true. The parable itself is actually pretty straightforward; it’s the reality the parable describes that’s hard.

The parable itself, we should keep in mind, comes on the heels of Peter’s question to Jesus about how many times he should forgive. When Jesus stuns him by multiplying Peter’s generous suggestion of forgiving someone seven times to seventy-seven (or, probably a better translation, seventy times seven) times, Jesus then illustrates the importance of forgiveness by sharing this parable.

While the overall message is pretty clear – echoing the Lord’s Prayer’s petition that we should forgive others even as we have been forgiven – there is still great value in opening the parable up for people. Let them know, for instance, that a talent was about 130 lbs. of silver and was the equivalent to about fifteen years of a laborer’s wages. Which means that the servant owed his master about 150,000 years of labor. In other words, he would never, ever, not in a million years, be able to pay his master back. A denarius, by comparison, was worth about a day’s wage, which meant that the second servant owed the forgiven one about a hundred days of labor – no small debt. But still...and everyone who hears this parable gets it...how could he possibly not overlook that (relatively) minor debt when he had just been forgiven an impossibly huge one?

The answer, I think, has to do with our penchant for counting, calculating, and keeping track. For while the unforgiving servant’s debt to his master has been wiped clean, he immediately moves on to the ledger he is incessantly keeping and focuses on the debt his fellow servant owes him. Nor is he alone in this penchant. Notice, for instance, where Peter starts this conversation: he asks Jesus for a *number*. He wants to know just how much will be expected of him, how much is reasonable, how much is required. And so he suggests what by all accounts is a more-than-sufficient amount of forgiveness.

Jesus, however, turns Peter’s question on his head by replying with a ridiculous, even impossible, reply. “You want to play the numbers game?” Jesus more or less asks, “okay, how about this one?” It’s not that Jesus wants Peter to increase his forgiveness quota, you see, it’s that he wants him to stop counting altogether simply because forgiveness, like love, is inherently and intimately relational rather than legal and therefore cannot be counted. Had Peter asked Jesus how many times he should love his neighbor, we’d perceive his

misunderstanding: love can't be quantified or counted. But he asks about forgiveness and we miss his mistake...

As I said at the beginning, the reality this parable bespeaks is not easy. At the same time, it is so incredibly central, even essential, to our life in this world and in God's kingdom. Thank you so much for taking on the challenge of opening up this parable that we may see and hear both God's amazing desire that we live by love and forgiveness and God's own promise of forgiveness and freedom when we fall short and feel captured by the past. Your words matter, Dear Partner, and I know God will use them to good effect."

<http://www.davidlose.net/2014/09/pentecost-14-a/> David Lose

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"If your Sunday worship service regularly includes confession and forgiveness, this would be an opportunity to take some liturgical license and move the confession and forgiveness to immediately after the sermon. Often our resistance to forgive is rooted in our resistance to believe that we ourselves can be forgiven. The final truth of this exchange between Peter and Jesus is that as much as we place controls over when and where and why we forgive others, we first do it to ourselves. Perhaps that's the hardest truth to hear, especially for us preachers. We know all too well and have felt all too often the weight of our own unworthiness of forgiveness – so then how can we possibly declare it for others?"

- <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=4968> [Karoline Lewis](#) Associate Professor of Preaching and the Marbury E. Anderson Chair in Biblical Preaching, Luther Seminar, Saint Paul, Minn.

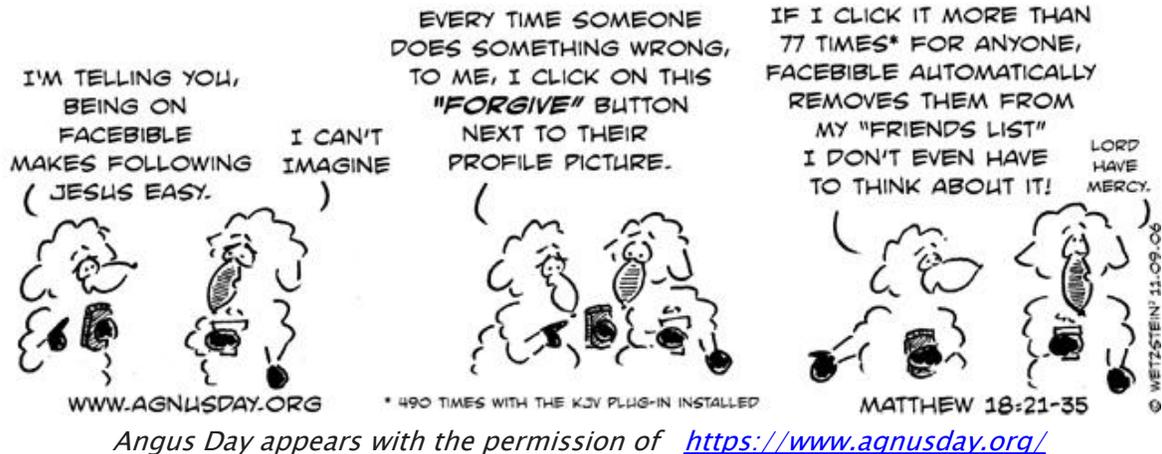
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"Someone once said that the scariest word in the entire New Testament is that tiny little word "as" in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our sins *as* we forgive those who sin against us." That vital connection between God's abiding forgiveness of us and of our in turn forgiving others tells us that we must forgive. It's the family style for the family of God and it starts with the Father and goes on down from there. This is not some weird demand on God's part, however. This is not some hoop we must jump through to earn our salvation or to perform like some trained dog just because God enjoys watching us do tricks. No, the reason for the connection between God's forgiving us and our forgiving others is because of the sheer *power* of God's forgiveness. It is so great that it simply *must and will* change us.

The reason God expects us to forgive as a result of our being forgiven is the same reason you can expect to be wet after diving into a lake: water is wet and when you immerse yourself in it, *you* get wet. So also with forgiving grace: grace is magnetic and beautiful. When God immerses you in grace and saves your life eternally by it, you will be dripping with grace yourself. You will be full of grace and truth and so spread it to others. God forgives us daily. Forgiveness is our We forgive others daily. lifestyle. It's our habit.

That very much seems to be Jesus' point in Matthew 18.

- https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-19a/?type=the_lectionary_gospel
Scott Hoezee



The Matthew Challenge It is 28 chapters long (1071 verses or 18,345 words, subject to the translation). Break that down to a schedule that works for you. If you are starting now, your new pace is 2.3 chapters per week (up from 2 weeks per chapter), or about 13 verses per day (up from three verses per day.) **Did that scare you off or encourage you?**

Weekly review thoughts



“How often should I forgive, Jesus?” Of course, Jesus’ response to Peter’s question doesn’t really provide an answer but rather points out the misdirection of the question itself. How many times should we forgive? The issue is not how much or how often we are asked to forgive or should forgive. The act of forgiveness is already a limitless, measureless act. Forgiveness is never *not* present in our lives and in our relationships. That’s the issue. Forgiveness is part and parcel of the Kingdom of Heaven. It’s a constant. It’s not optional. It’s not a choice. We want it to be -- and that’s at the heart of Peter’s question.

This is forgiveness according to the Kingdom of Heaven and it’s a hard truth to hear. As much as we want to exercise one of the essential marks of the Christian faith, we cannot bring ourselves to accept or imagine the endless and inestimable nature of forgiveness that Jesus assumes...

But, declare it we must. Believe it we must... “

- <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=4968> [Karoline Lewis](#) Associate Professor of Preaching and the Marbury E. Anderson Chair in Biblical Preaching, Luther Seminar, Saint Paul, Minn.