

XXII TRINITY 2016
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
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PHILIPPIANS 1.3 ST. MATTHEW 18.21

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"Forgive us the wrongs we have done...as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us"...what Jesus taught us to pray when we say "Our Father"!

Forgiveness is a topic often covered in Sunday Discussion Group. Forgiveness is why we are here today...God is ready to forgive us no matter how badly we mess things up in our lives.

In Psalm 103 we hear about God's awesome tendency to forgive:

The Lord is merciful and loving, slow to become angry and full of constant love.

He does not keep on rebuking; he is not angry forever.

He does not punish us as we deserve or repay us for our sins and wrongs...so great is his love for those who honor him.

Since the message of the Gospel is forgiveness...God forgiving us and we are supposed to be forgiving others...may we ever withhold forgiveness...even when someone has done us a terrible wrong and refuses to admit it?

Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone...seven times? Peter thought he was being generous...the rabbis taught three times was sufficient. Peter might have been taken back by Jesus' reply he had to forgive someone 490 times.

Jesus doesn't mean 490 times literally. He means we must always be ready to extend forgiveness to someone who has wronged us...even when the wrong hurts us deeply. There is no limit to how many times we must be ready to forgive someone.

To illustrate his point Jesus tells the story of the man who owed a king 10,000 talents. A talent was a unit of measurement in weight in silver...worth about \$1000 today. The man owed the king about \$10-million.

The king would have been perfectly justified confiscating the man's property and putting him and his family in jail until the debt was paid. The man promises he will repay the debt if he is given a little more time. The king

knows there is no possible way the man will ever be able to repay what amounts to a king's ransom...and wipes out the debt completely. That was one kind and generous king!

The guy in the story now had a chance to show the same kindness the king showed him when he meets a coworker who owed him 100 pence...about \$100 dollars in today's money...pocket change by comparison. Instead...he has the coworker arrested and thrown in jail until the \$100 is repaid.

What does the king have to say about the man whose huge debt had just been wiped out? He calls him a worthless slave who asked and had his debt cancelled...and should have shown compassion and mercy toward his coworker who owed him very little.

If we refuse to forgive someone who has wronged us no matter how serious the offense, we cannot expect God to forgive us when we do wrong. Refusing to forgive others is the same as saying Jesus didn't know what he was talking about when he told us to pray "Our Father"!

What about the person who has hurt us and refuses to admit they have done anything wrong or ask for our forgiveness? C.S. Lewis wrote, "To be Christian means to forgive the inexcusable...because God has forgiven the inexcusable in us."

Forgiveness is a two way street...it becomes complete when both parties get reconciled. We ask God to forgive us when we do wrong...and he does. We must forgive others who ask for our forgiveness. And we must ask them to forgive us when we have hurt them. Full reconciliation is not possible until both parties reach an agreement.

God forgives us because he wants to...not because he has to...knowing this makes our lives better. Jesus wants us to show the same kindness and compassion and unconditional love toward others God shows toward us.

God's forgiveness is a gift to us...our forgiveness of others is not a gift but an obligation we must take seriously.

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