

**XXII TRINITY 2017**  
**SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
**PHILIPPIANS 1.3 ST. MATTHEW 18.21**



Forgiveness is a great idea...C.S. Lewis talks about in *Mere Christianity*...until we have something to forgive.

We spend a lot of time talking about forgiveness in Church...some would say too much time...but forgiveness is what Jesus is all about...so we can't ignore the subject.

Last Sunday's shooting at the First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs, Texas, claimed the lives of 26 parishioners...many of them small children. The pastor of the rural Texas church lost a daughter in the shooting...has announced the murders have so devastated his small congregation...the church building will be demolished.

God loves us and has the degree to forgive even the most outrageous and horrendous behavior...his forgiveness surpasses anything we can imagine...and serves as the model we must use when we are confronted with forgiving others...and in asking others to forgive us.

The members of a small Texas church have hardly had time to process what happened to their parish family...much less think about forgiving the man who executed 26 people. C.S. Lewis also wrote that to be Christian means to forgive the inexcusable...because God has forgiven the inexcusable in us.

Does what happened at a small rural church in Texas affect us...and are we called to forgive the actions of a man whose former wife described as being "filled with demons or hatred"? What affects the Church in Texas...or any part of the World...affects us...because we are all Saints of God...and we hurt when others hurt. What about the forgiveness part...that's easier said than done!

Is there ever a point when we can withhold forgiveness? Our friend Peter was hoping for an easy way out when he asked Jesus in today's Gospel if he could stop forgiving someone who had hurt him seven times...Jesus' answer doesn't come with an opt-out clause...he said we always have to have the capacity to forgive someone who

has hurt us...no matter how badly they have treated us. Does Jesus really mean that?

Jesus goes on to tell a story about an ungrateful worker who owes the king 10,000 talents...in today's money...about \$14 billion dollars. The worker had two options...pay up...or his property would be confiscated and his family sold into slavery...until every last cent was paid.

But the king then does something unexpected...he was moved with compassion at the tearful worker and wrote the entire debt off...and sent the happy worker on his way home with a fresh start for himself...and his family.

On the way home the worker meets a coworker who owes him 100 pence...a few hundred dollars at the most. Instead of showing the same kind of compassion toward his coworker the king had just shown him...he starts choking him...and has him thrown in jail.

The king is justifiably angry...when he finds out about the ungrateful worker's treatment of his fellow worker...and has the guy arrested a put in jail...probably for the rest of his life...since he can never repay the huge sum of money he owes the king in the first place.

The ungrateful worker rejected the king's compassion and generosity...by refusing to show the same compassion and generosity toward his fellow worker who owed him a few hundred dollars. It's the same with us...when we refuse to forgive someone we set ourselves above God...and we reject his love and forgiveness.

Forgiveness is not a one-way or one-sided proposition and it is not automatic. While God never permits us to opt-out of forgiving someone...we can't force our forgiveness on someone who doesn't want it. We can only hope and pray for the time they do. And we must ask others to forgive us when we have hurt them...we can't opt-out of that either.

Whether it's the hurt of a small Texas church or Saint Joseph Parish or something in our own lives...there may be anger and questions and even guilt...and what we all hope and pray for...forgiveness.

