

The 16th Sunday after Pentecost – A 09/17/2023

In our Gospel lesson today, Jesus continues to teach his disciples and us how to live in his kingdom. Today we hear Jesus talking about forgiveness. It seems that Peter wants to push the ticket and really get Jesus to spell it out. So, Jesus did, in telling a parable. One has to wonder if Peter liked the answer.

The king was very generous, and he was hoping that this was a model for his servants. Unfortunately, that was not the case. In the end the generosity was basically revoked.

This was a harsh revoking of generosity by the king. This is where we need to be careful not to totally compare the king to God. Jesus was trying to make a point, but we do not know this to be God's nature. What we understand Jesus to be saying is how important it is to forgive and from your heart.

We know that there are some things that are easier to forgive than others. When forgiveness is needed it means that there is some kind of brokenness. For forgiveness to happen a change needs to occur in one or both parties. Sometimes it will only occur in only one party.

When someone doesn't follow through once or twice and they say that they are sorry, most often we can forgive and let it go. When it continues to happen, the sorry part begins not to work, and forgiveness becomes more and more difficult. So, does Jesus say that we just continue to forgive?

If you continue to set up something to do with them, yes then you are probably expected to forgive. You can forgive, but then draw boundary lines and say this is the last time I am going to try. I don't believe that Jesus is saying you need to be a doormat.

Forgiveness is a process. As the level of hurt deepens, the longer it can take to be able to forgive. Part of the process is realizing that the forgiveness can really be for you also. The longer that you hold on to a hurt, the more it can debilitate you.

Forgiveness is a way of life that Jesus calls us to and models for us. True forgiveness comes from the heart Jesus tells us. It is not easy and again most of what Jesus asks us to do is not easy.

Remember last week Jesus was talking about how to handle disagreements or conflicts and was teaching about listening to each other. We know that this is not easy at times. Now today, Jesus knew that these disagreements could turn into conflicts and produce hurt and in order for the kingdom to function and carry out

the mission of love they need to be addressed and healed. This is where forgiveness comes in.

When we carry around hurt, our effectiveness to love diminishes and will continue to, until we address the conflict that needs healing. Sometimes this healing or resolution will only happen in one person. We are only responsible for ourselves.

Healing for us who have been hurt is about letting it go. Acknowledging it, speaking to the person that we have felt harmed by and then begin the process of letting it go. There are times, depending on how deep it goes, one may need professional help.

This really becomes more about our own health. We do not have control over the other person; thus it is better to go into the conversation not expecting them to understand. If they do, then it will seem even easier to let it go.

Now we may be the person who may have done the hurting. Honestly, it is easy to hurt others unintentionally. We can say we didn't mean to do it, but can we still take responsibility for our words and actions?

We could say well now you have hurt me by saying that I hurt you. But no, stop. Jesus is teaching about forgiveness today and loving. The bottom line is that we make mistakes, and we always will. We are called to acknowledge how we may have hurt someone in any way. This is how healing and restoration happens in Jesus' kingdom. It happens through forgiveness.

At times we may not feel like taking on this character of generosity of loving and forgiving as there are times we choose to wallow in hurt. Our need to preserve "me" can become overwhelming if we do not choose to make forgiveness part of our behavior, part of our character. Forgiveness is generous and it is not all about me.

We have the most gracious model in God coming to earth in God's son Jesus to offer us forgiveness, salvation and new life. We can say that we are not Jesus and that is true, but we are not called to do this forgiving thing on our own. We have been given the Holy Spirit to help us.

In reality we cannot do anything completely on our own of what Jesus teaches us as to how to live in the kingdom. Jesus is only looking for our willingness or obedience to say yes to picking up the cross and continuing his work. Today Jesus is reminding us how forgiveness works in the kingdom. Then to allow the Holy Spirit to help us as we stumble along trying to follow Jesus' teaching about how to live in the kingdom and specifically today, forgiving.

God in Jesus Christ was and is extravagant in loving and forgiving and in turn we are called to be extravagant in our loving and forgiving. There is an example that I would like to remind you of:

1) Amish Shooter Siege at Amish School Ends in Murders, Suicide
StoryCorps September 30, 2016 4:38 AM ET Heard on [Morning Edition](#) By NPR Staff
Ten years ago, a gunman barricaded himself inside a one-room Amish schoolhouse near Lancaster, Pa. Then he opened fire. Charles "Charlie" Roberts killed five children and injured five others before killing himself.

The Amish community responded in a way that many found surprising: They forgave the shooter. And, in the years since, they have grown close to his family.

Charlie's mother turned on the radio that morning to hear" the newscaster say that there had been a shooting at the local Amish schoolhouse," "By that time she was at her son's home, and she saw her husband and the state trooper standing right in front of her as she I pulled in, "She looked at her husband and said, 'It was Charlie.' He said, 'I will never face my Amish neighbors again.'

That week, the Roberts had a private funeral for their son, but as they went to the gravesite, they saw as many over 40 Amish started coming out from around the side of the graveyard, surrounding them like a crescent.

"Love just shown from them," Terri said. "I do recall the fathers saying, 'I believe that I have forgiven,' but there are some days that she questions that."

Terri found it especially hard to accept that forgiveness when she thinks of one of the survivors, Rosanna. She was the most injured of the survivors and had injuries to her head. She was now 15, still tube-fed and in a wheelchair and continue to have seizures. They were worse when it got to be closer to the anniversary date.

Terri asked if it would be possible for her to help with Rosanna once a week and she began reading to her, bathing her and drying her hair"

Terri had heard one of the fathers say, 'None of us would have ever chosen this. But the relationships that we have built through it, you can't put a price on that.' "
"Their choice to allow life to move forward through forgiveness was a healing balm for all of them.," she said. "And I think it's a message the world needs."

How many of us ask the question could we have forgiven Charlie and his parents? The Amish had forgiven Charlie and his family to the point of inviting his parents into their lives. I don't believe they could have done it without the help of the Holy Spirit. Not that they were perfect, but they were wearing their generosity of forgiveness and love as they knew God in Jesus Christ had forgiven them out of love.

This is what we are called to do, to live a life of generosity in love and forgiveness, with the help of the Holy Spirit.