

## Reflection for Sunday 13 September 2020, Trinity 14

### Matthew Ch18 v 21-35

This week our Gospel from Matthew focuses on forgiveness. The Oxford dictionary explains that to forgive means to, remit, let off a debt or person; to pardon an offence, or offences or offender.

The narrative begins with Peter asking Jesus, "Lord how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

It is interesting to note that the Rabbis taught that people should forgive those who offended them but only three times. Peter, trying to be generous, asked Jesus if seven (the perfect number) was enough times to forgive someone.



Jesus responds, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

Meaning that we should not even keep track of how many times we forgive someone. We should always forgive those who are truly repentant, no matter how many times they ask.

Jesus then goes on to explain through a story that the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wants to settle accounts with his servants.

In Bible time serious consequences awaited those who could not pay their debts. A person lending money could seize the borrower who could not pay and force him or his family to work until the debt was paid. The debtor could also be thrown into prison, or his family could be sold into slavery to help pay off the debt. It was hoped that the debtor, while in prison, would sell off his landholdings or that relatives would pay the debt. If not, the debtor could remain in prison for life.

The story highlights that just as God (the king in the story) has forgiven all our sins, we should not withhold forgiveness from others. As we realize how completely Christ has forgiven us, it should produce an attitude of forgiveness towards others. When we do not forgive others, we are setting ourselves above Christ's law of love.

I think it's important to note here that there are times when we really find it extremely hard to forgive, especially if we have been deeply hurt or have suffered greatly. What then? I do not think there is an easy answer to that question but when faced with moments like this offering to God in

prayer our feelings and responses does help. God knows we are humans with many weaknesses, and He understands us far more than we realize. He is more than aware that we may struggle at times with forgiveness, He wants to see us try but when we find it too hard He is there awaiting our plea for help to pass on our weakness to Him. Offering our failings of forgiveness to God our Father begins in us a process of healing. Whereas to allow resentment and anger to fester and eat away at us, increases the burden of not being able to forgive and makes it much harder to let go.

Our relationship with God needs to be an important part of our Christian life and cannot be taken for granted. To make time to both listen and talk to God enriches and sustains us in faith and, at moments when we find things in life hard, we know that our trust and love of God will never let us down.

*Rev'd Abbey*