

## Pentecost 15 2020 Worship Devotional

When we hear the words of forgiveness in worship and sign ourselves with the cross, we are renewed in baptism to be signs of reconciliation into the world. Our Gospel once again this week takes us to that place of forgiveness in our relationships with one another. How many times can you keep forgiving another person? How many times do you want to be forgiven? And, can we ever escape the cycle of sin? The challenge is to understand the boundless mercy of God and then to seek the ways of peace with our brothers and sisters in our community.

*But Joseph said to them, '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. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones.' In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.*

### Genesis 50:19-21

This is the epilogue to the Joseph story, where the bothers come before Joseph in fear and guilt, remembering their past abuse of Joseph, selling him off as a slave and declaring him dead to his father. How should Joseph respond? Judgement? A turning away? But no, Joseph does not harbor retribution, instead he has moved beyond, and seeks to acknowledge the place of God in his life circumstances. He has been faithful, and his faith calls for him to live out the promise of God, speaking kindly and offering up the gift of forgiveness.

*Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times.*

### Matthew 18:21-22

All of us have those troublesome people in our lives. They irritate and confuse us, sometimes just by their mere presence. Others are for more diabolical, and whether they know it or not, they sow the seeds of discontent and anger, creating chaos. So, how do you “get along”. And what should we be about, certainly we do not want to reward the abusive behavior. Peter asks, “How many times do we forgive.” And the response is unsettling. Always and forever, so says Jesus. But lest you think that is succumbing to the abuse, no that is the release of the hurt and anger, as forgiveness takes the “power” away from the abuser. In the dramatic story that follows, we see the consequences of mercy, and so also the reverse when forgiveness is withheld.

*We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. 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.*

### Romans 14:7-9

Paul's words in the Roman epistle take us to the core of our faith in Christ Jesus. This is the final outlay of the promise of God in Christ Jesus. This is the “why” we forgive and are forgiven. It is Christ who has died upon the cross, taking on our human failings, our inability to forgive, and our own abusive behaviors. Casting our hope and life upon Jesus calls us to live a life worthy of the calling, and that calling says this; it is all about God. God forgiveness, God's hope for a life beyond our dysfunction, to a life of loving kindness.

