

Lord, how often
should I forgive?

MATTHEW 18:21



St. Paul's Lutheran Church

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www.stpaulsyork.org

www.stpaulspreschoolyork.com

Facebook: St. Paul's Lutheran Church York PA on Springettsbury & George

YouTube: St. Paul's Lutheran Church - South George St. York

WELCOME Thank you for being with us.

We are a Christian church within the Lutheran tradition (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America) and we welcome people of all Christian traditions as well as people of other faiths and people of little or no faith. Christian worship has been offered to God in this congregation for 187 years. By worshipping with us today, you become part of that living tradition.

Offerings Offerings are received during the liturgy. They are presented along with gifts of bread and wine at the altar. You may also donate via our website at www.stpaulsyork.org

Postlude It is our tradition to remain seated for the postlude. If you need to leave we ask that you do so reverently. This tradition developed as a result of our livestream. We want anyone viewing to be able to listen to the postlude without unnecessary distraction. Thank you.

Restrooms are available in the Good Shepherd Room (Springettsbury lobby) and the narthex (George St). Baby changing stations are provided in these restrooms as well as in the nursery.

The Nursery is accessed through the front right double doors. The liturgy is live-streamed into the Nursery. Parents are asked to stay with their children. Quiet activities are also available in the Narthex for infant through preschool children to use with an adult.

Presentation of Bibles and Installation of church school teachers will be included during this morning's liturgy. In the Sacrament of Holy Baptism we state that we will "place in their hands the Holy Scriptures and provide for their Christian instruction.." As we fulfill this portion of our sacrament promises, do pray for our children, confirmands, and teaching staff.



The altar flowers are presented to the Glory of God
In loving memory of husband George and loving memory of son, Michael Kemper,
by loving wife and mother, Ann Kemper

STAFF		
Pastor	Rev. Stanley Reep	prreep.stpaulsyork@comcast.net
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Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday, September 17, 2023
Holy Communion 8:00 & 10:30 AM

PRELUDE

O God, Look Down from Heaven Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow

Stand

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

The assembly stands turning to face the Baptismal Font. The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

In the name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Let us pray. Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen

Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

ENTRANCE HYMN

What Is This Place (ELW 524)



1 What is this place where we are meet-ing? On - ly a house, the
2 Words from a - far, stars that are fall - ing, sparks that are sown in
3 And we ac - cept bread at this ta - ble, bro - ken and shared, a



earth its floor. Walls and a roof shel - ter - ing peo - ple.
us like seed: names for our God, dreams, signs and won - ders
liv - ing sign. Here in this world, dy - ing and liv - ing.



win-dows for light, an o - pen door. Yet it be-comes a bod - y that lives
sent from the past are all we need. We in this place re - mem-ber and speak
we are each oth-er's bread and wine. This is the place where we can re - ceive



when we are gath - ered here, and know our God is near.
a - gain what we have heard: God's free re - deem-ing word.
what we need to in - crease: our jus - tice and God's peace.

APOSTOLIC GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, you declare your almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity. Grant us the fullness of your grace, that, pursuing what you have promised, we may share your heavenly glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Sit

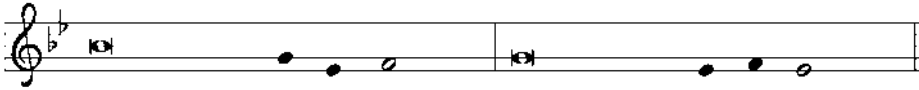
PRESENTATION OF BIBLES

FIRST READING Genesis 50:15-21

¹⁵Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" ¹⁶So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, ¹⁷'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." ¹⁹But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? ²⁰Even 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. ²¹So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

PSALM Psalm 103:8-13

The organ introduces the tone, then it is sung unaccompanied by all



- ⁸ **The LORD is full of compas- | sion and mercy,***
 slow to anger and | of great kindness.
- ⁹ **He will not al- | ways accuse us,***
 nor will he keep his an- | ger forever.
- ¹⁰ **He has not dealt with us accord- | ing to our sins,***
 nor rewarded us accord- | ing to our wickedness.
- ¹¹ **For as the heavens are high | above the earth,***
 so is his mercy great upon | those who fear him.
- ¹² **As far as the east is | from the west,***
 so far has he removed our | sins from us.
- ¹³ **As a father cares | for his children,***
 so does the LORD care for | those who fear him.

SECOND READING Romans 14:1-12 (*back cover*)

Stand
VERSE

Sung by all



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.
Repeat alleluia
Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

HOLY GOSPEL Matthew 18:21-35
The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew
At the conclusion of the Gospel.
The Gospel of the Lord.

(back cover)

Glory to you, O Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sit
SERMON

Rev. Stan Reep

Stand

HYMN OF THE DAY

Forgive Our Sins As We Forgive (ELW #605)



- 1 "For - give our sins as we for - give," you taught us, Lord, to pray;
- 2 How can your par - don reach and bless the un - for - giv - ing heart
- 3 In blaz - ing light your cross re - veals the truth we dim - ly knew;
- 4 Lord, cleanse the depths with - in our souls and bid re - sent - ment cease;



but you a - lone can grant us grace to live the words we say.
that broods on wrongs and will not let old bit - ter - ness de - part?
how tri - fling oth - ers' debts to us; how great our debt to you!
then, by your mer - cy rec - on - ciled, our lives will spread your peace.

INSTALLATION OF CHURCH SCHOOL TEACHERS

APOSTLE'S CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.**

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.* On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Remembering the caring and generous works of God, we pray for the church, creation, and the needs of our neighbors.

A brief silence.

Heavenly Father, we pray for the church. Bless the missions and ministries of congregations so that they bear fruit as they proclaim the good news of salvation. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

We pray for creation. Send rain to lands experiencing drought and healing to polluted rivers. Enrich the soil for trees and plants and crops. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

We pray for all who govern. Encourage those in positions of power to lead with empathy, practice forgiveness, and care for those who struggle. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

We pray for our neighbors who face illness of any kind. For those strained financially; for all living with chronic pain, mental illness, the disease of addiction, or otherwise afraid or in harm's way. Protect all who cry out for mercy (*especially*). Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

We pray for our congregation. Open our hearts to practice intentional invitation. Help us to forgive each other, practice patience, and choose welcome over judgment. Give our church school teachers renewed energy and vision as we begin the educational year. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give thanks for the saints who died in faith. Show us how to live faithfully, creatively, and lovingly in your church and world (*like Hildegard, Abbess of Bingen, whom we commemorate today*). Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Remember us according to your steadfast love as we offer these and the prayers of our heart, trusting in your compassion made known through Jesus Christ.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

The ministers and congregation greet one another in the name of the Lord.

Sit

OFFERING 8:00 AM *O Jesus, My Delight* Johann Gottfried Walther
10:30 AM Chancel Choir *God Your Glory Fill the Earth* Leo Sowerby

Stand

OFFERTORY *The gifts of bread and wine and monetary gifts are presented at the altar.*



Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of



bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be



fed with the bread of life. Gath - er the hopes and the dreams of all; u -



nite them with the prayers we of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your



pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray.

Merciful God, as grains of wheat scattered upon the hills were gathered together to become one bread, so let your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom, for yours is the glory through Jesus Christ, now and forever. Amen.

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

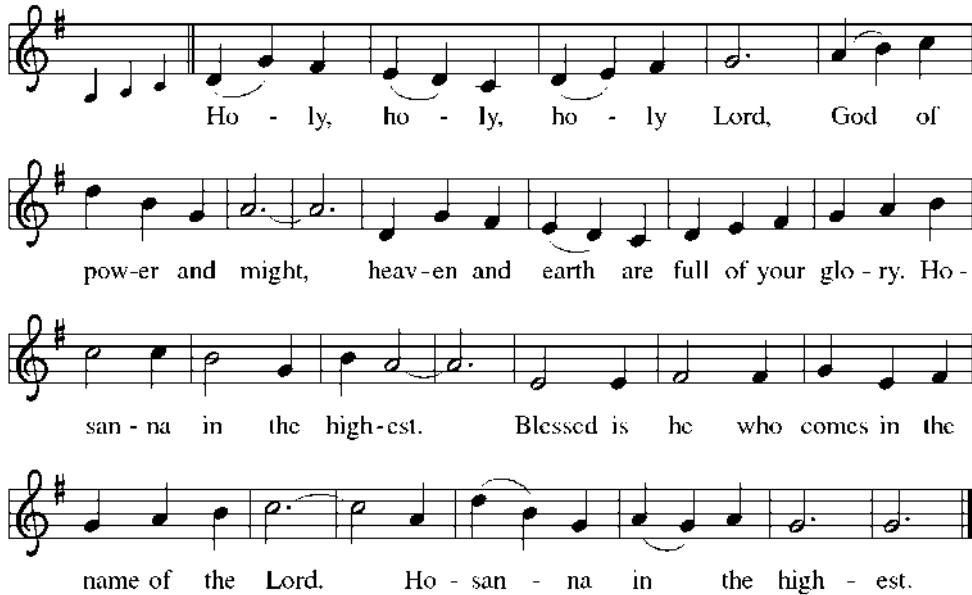
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE *The preface appropriate to the day is said.*

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

SANCTUS *Sung by all.*



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of
pow-er and might, heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -
san - na in the high-est. Blessed is he who comes in the
name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

THANKSGIVING

Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth.

In mercy for our fallen world you gave your only Son,
that all those who believe in him should not perish,
but have eternal life.

We give thanks to you

for the salvation you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ.

Send now your Holy Spirit into our hearts,
that we may receive our Lord with a living faith
as he comes to us in his holy supper.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray...

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,**

FRACTION RITE *A brief silence is kept*

AGNUS DEI *Sung by all.*



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have



mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the



world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a -



way the sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

Sit *The pastor cleanses hands and prepares for the distribution of Holy Communion.*

COMMUNION OF THE FAITHFUL

Holy Communion at St. Paul’s Church is “open” to all believers who trust that the Risen Christ is present for his people in the Holy Eucharist.

Procedure for receiving Communion:

- 1. Come to communion using the center aisle.*
- 2. Communion glasses are placed on credence tables at the front pews (left and right side).*
- 3. Take a communion glass from the tray of glasses.*
- 4. Take your place along the chancel step. The ministers will bring the bread and wine to you.*
- 5. Extend your hands to receive the communion host.*
- 6. Consume the communion host.*
- 7. Hold the communion glass with both hands at chest height so that the communion assistant can easily pour the wine into the glass.*
- 8. Consume the wine before you leave the chancel edge.*
- 9. Place the used cup in an empty tray located on a credence table at the side aisle.*
- 10. Return to your pew using the side aisle.*

COMMUNION HYMN

10:30 AM Chancel Choir *Thee Will I Love* James Harp

Stand

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray. We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life. In your mercy, strengthen us through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

BLESSING

Almighty God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

HYMN

Praise the Lord, Rise Up Rejoicing (ELW 544) next page

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE

Festive Intrada

Paul Frey

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Praise the Lord, Rise Up Rejoicing



1 Praise the Lord, rise up re - joic - ing, wor - ship, thanks, de -
2 Scat - tered flock, one shep - herd shar - ing, lost and lone - ly,
3 Sins for - giv - en, wrongs for - giv - ing, we go forth a -



vo - tion voic - ing; glo - ry be to God on high!
one voice hear - ing, ears at - ten - tive to your word;
lert and liv - ing in your Spir - it, strong and free.



Christ, your cross and pas - sion shar - ing, by this eu - cha -
by your blood new life re - ceiv - ing, in your bod - y,
Part - ners in your new cre - a - tion, seek - ing peace in



rist de - clar - ing yours the fi - nal vic - to - ry.
firm be - liev - ing, we are yours, and you the Lord.
ev - 'ry na - tion, may we faith - ful fol - l'wers be.

Text: Howard C. A. Gaunt, 1902–1983, alt.

Music: ALLES IST AN GOTTES SEGEN. Johann Löhner, 1645–1705, adapt.

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Food Pantry—Fall

Items needed: Canned fruit, canned chicken, canned tuna & Peanut Butter. We also need paper grocery bags with handles and plastic bags. Money donations are gratefully accepted. Please place cash or check in a “special” envelope marked “Pantry”. **Volunteers are needed Tuesday mornings to help our neighbors shop. Call Teresa Rohrbaugh or the church office**

DR. GEOFFREY SIMON, ORGANIST
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1
4:00 PM
St. Paul's Lutheran Church

The York Chapter, American Guild of Organists is pleased to present Geoffrey Simon in an organ recital at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 25 West Springettsbury Ave. York, PA on Sunday, October 1 at 4:00 PM.

Geoffrey Simon recently moved back to his hometown of York, Pennsylvania. His father was formerly Pastor of Union Lutheran Church, West Market Street, York. Geoff and his wife Sarah Morgan have been attending worship at St. Paul's. They plan to sing in the Chancel Choir.

Invite a friend to join you for this organ recital.

Youth News

Sr High Youth Fellowship grades 9 through 12

Faith and Conversation around the table

Sunday, October 1st Issacs Restaurant, South York Plaza 5:00pm

On Sunday, October 1st Sr High Youth Grades 9 through 12 are invited to share conversation and dinner around the table. They will connect with each other while discussing a topic that they helped to choose ahead of time. Meals will be shared, stories will be told, together they will experience God's nearness, God's kindness and God's Love. While sharing stories they will experience God's Grace. At the Table we Talk - At the Table we Listen.

Youth Fellowship grades 7 through 12

11:45am following the 10:30am Liturgy

Sunday, October 8 Youth Room

Following the Liturgy the Youth will fill their lunch plates during 2nd Sunday Sandwiches and come to the Youth Room for a time of fellowship, prayer, and fun group icebreakers.

From Bread and Wine to Bountiful Giving

The Stewardship Team, under the leadership of Nicki Herdson and Kirsten Barnes, has prepared a focused program for us. Beginning on the First Sunday of October we will be called upon to respond to God's call to faithful living which includes bountiful giving. Such giving includes our financial gifts, as well as the use of our time and talents in service to and for others.

This Week at St. Paul's
Church Office hours Mon-Thurs 8am-4pm

Sunday, September 17

Presentation of Bibles
8:00 AM Holy Eucharist
9:15 AM Sunday School Begins for All
9:15 AM Confirmation Class
9:15 AM Swahili class for Mission Trip
10:30 AM Holy Eucharist—Live Stream
6:30 PM AA meeting Community Rm

Monday, September 18

7:00 PM Finance Committee—ZOOM

Tuesday, September 19

9:30 AM Food Pantry
6:00 PM CREATE—Preschool thru Grade 6

Wednesday, September

10:00 AM Preschool Chapel with Pastor
10:30 AM Bible Study—Christ Hall
11:30 AM Mpuguso Mtg—Christ Hall

Thursday, September 21

9:10 AM Fellowship Mtg—Christ Hall
10:00 AM Preschool Chapel with Pastor
6:30 PM Handbell Choir—Chancel
7:30 PM Chancel Choir—Music Room

Sunday, September 24

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist
9:15 AM Sunday School for All
9:15 AM AED Training
9:15 AM Confirmation Class
10:30 AM Holy Eucharist—Live Stream
6:30 PM AA meeting Community Rm



**Sunday Morning
Adult Study**

Aligning with our current lectionary scriptures using the gospel of Matthew, our Sunday Adult Christian Education class will begin with a five-week study of the book of Matthew. Several scriptures will be featured throughout the gospel narrative, and we will use a Book of Faith Series publication from Augsburg Fortress. Please join us starting September 17th for this deeper look into Matthew! Tristan Ericson will facilitate and the class will meet in Christ Hall located on the main level.

Harvest Dinner Tickets are on sale. The dinner will be held on October 7, 2023. *Please note the new date.* Proceeds benefit the Food Pantry. This year will feature select regional wines and local microbrews paired with the menu. Ticket cost is \$100 per person. Contact the office for tickets.



Please be sure to check with the church secretary *before* you schedule your meetings at the church. Call or email the office with your request.

Serving the Lord with Gladness

Please find a replacement if you are unable to serve on you scheduled date.

DATE	TIME	Assisting Minister	Crucifer	Lector	Communion Assistants	Greeters	Ushers	Altar Set-up & Clean-up
9/17	8:00 AM	Jennifer Ports	Ken Hinkle	Laura Livingston		Mike & Linda Hanson	Alex Bastian, Michael Poster	Ron & Norma Riese
	10:30 AM	Tom Gibson	Larry Becker	Janet Moore	Larry Moore	Janet & Larry Moore	Dave Kopp, Sandy Dickensheets, Steve Heistand	Janet & Larry Moore



St Paul’s is collecting clothing for Union Lutheran Church’s Clothing Ministry and your help is requested. Union collects ‘gently used’ clothing (and shoes) for its clothing closet and offers it **free of charge** to needy families in the York City community. A bin has been placed in the gathering space of Christ Hall to collect any clothing our members would like to donate. These donations will surely be a blessing to our neighbors. Union’s volunteers are very appreciative of our cooperation and our help.



Mission Trip to Tanzania—Our delegation has been assembled. We are blessed to have a group of 12 households comprised of 26 persons representing St. Paul’s as we travel to our sister congregation next June. If you would like to help defray the cost of our delegation please use a special envelope located in the pew rack and mark it “Tanzania Trip Donation”. Please remember that this is not a vacation, it is a mission trip. We do need help defraying the cost for participants.



Thank you to everyone who made Pastor’s return celebration such a success!

Emily and I extend our sincere thanks for the joyful welcome we received last Sunday. The delicious breakfast, the gorgeous flowers, and your kind words we all appreciated. Thank you, Pastor Stan.



*Please extend birthday wishes to our September “Vintage” Birthdays:
Janice Cromer*

“Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair.” Tangled, the Disney remake of the classic Rapunzel tale permits the beautiful Rapunzel who has been trapped in the tower for the majority of her life, to venture out into the dangerous world. The story takes on its own twists and turns with Rapunzel being freed from the tower to pursue her dream. Her dream, in the remake, is to witness the annual setting off of magic lanterns into the night sky. The male counterpart, a man trapped in the poor choices of his past, agrees to aid her with her dream. The Disney version, with vivid colorful animation, and catchy tunes, advances the plot. One song in particular “I’ve got a dream” is rather witty, brilliantly composed by Alan Menken and Glenn Evan Slater captures the many dreams of a community stuck in the present reality stemming from past mistakes, disappointments, and tragedy. I share only a portion of the lyrics. Stanza one sung by a one handed pirate brute of a man with a gleaming hook: I’m malicious, mean and scary. My sneer could curdle dairy. And violence wise, my hands are not the cleanest. But despite my evil look, And my temper and my hook, I’ve always yearned to be a concert pianist. And the entire community chimes in: He’s got a dream, He’s got a dream, See, I ain’t as cruel and vicious as I seem. Though I do like breaking femurs, you can count me with the dreamers, like everybody else, I’ve got a dream.

Joseph has dreams. His dreams of the future were beyond the imagination for his older brothers and his dear old dad Jacob to comprehend. No dreams of concert pianist here, it was the dreams of sheaves and stars bowing down to him that got him tossed into an abandoned well, then sold to Midianite merchants and the story that he was “dead” circulating around the homestead by his brothers. The coat, which we have embellished with many colors, had long sleeves and was only a minor detail in the narrative that began in chaos, Joseph cast into an abandoned well, and through God’s Word brought forth things beyond imagination, enough food to sustain a nation during a famine and forgiveness for jealous actions.

Those Midianite merchants delivered Joseph safely in the land of Egypt, Egypt, the land of the Pharaoh, and of fertile soil, rich culture, and many gods. It is in that land where Joseph’s interpretation of the Pharaoh’s dreams swept him into good favor advancing the story. Now in the 50th chapter of the book of Genesis, the last chapter in the book of beginnings, a new beginning is about to be revealed. Those pesky older brothers who sold him to the traveling Merchants years before, and spun a tall tale that he was “dead,” they have traveled the dangerous road to Egypt themselves one last time.

This time their father Jacob is dead. The generous hospitality and renewed relationship awarded them by Joseph in past visits could easily be retracted. The brothers face a new circumstance requiring new assurances. Their years of guilt and fear associated with their jealousy and their inappropriate actions plagued them as they anticipate meeting with Joseph. It is of course, the wronged party who can break a cycle such as this. It is only the injured one who can allow forgiveness to flow forth. So when they beg Joseph to forgive their transgression and the harm they did to him. Joseph wept. His brothers fell down and they wept too. They are willing to be servants, slaves for their brother Joseph. But he calls to them *“Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God meant it for good.”* What? No judging, no revenge, no putting them in their place, no extreme action?

His brothers had planned it for evil, while God planned it for good. Joseph's brothers were so concerned about their own plan and plot and action that in the midst of their scheme they were unable to recognize another plan about which none of them knew, a plan hidden but sure in its work. This hidden plan was God's. It is a Genesis of its own for relationship, and family, and tribe, and nation, and future that for so many is beyond imagination.

Forgiveness is front and center in the lectionary readings this morning. Forgiveness expressed through familiar scripture texts. Joseph, granting forgiveness to his brothers in the final chapter of the book that means beginnings. And Peter questioning Jesus about how many times to forgive not knowing how many times he will deny the Lord. And as if we didn't pay attention to Joseph or listen in on Peter's question to Jesus, Paul throws us a zinger regarding judging and the accountability we each must give before God.

While forgiveness is front and center in the lectionary readings, it seems far from center in our secular world. Recently I saw a T shirt touting the phrase "*Revenge is sweet and not fattening.*" Revenge, not forgiveness, may be the more popular action.

More than a decade ago the box office success topping 1.5 billion was for a movie highlighting the work of Avengers! When wronged wouldn't it be nice to have the team of super heroes from the Marvel Comic strip leap into action on your behalf? And yet, as skilled, gifted, physically strong, fast thinking and acting as comic book super heroes are the biblical witness advocates forgiveness not revenge. Seeking revenge and avenging wrongs is not the way forward. The Genesis narrative is a powerful comment and reflection on disappointment, forgiveness, death and life. It seems somehow to embrace all of these and hold them in some kind of tension when I simply cannot. Joseph isn't about avenging his brothers for the calamity brought upon him through their jealous behavior, forgiveness is what he bestows.

Forgiveness is central. And forgiveness is God's to give and grant and bring about. God's forgiving love began in chaos and is brought forth in the Word made flesh, Jesus. The narrative advances. Rarely do repentant perpetrators come forth. But when they do, it seems from the Genesis text that tears often accompany their fear filled lives. The Psalms and prayers of lament reflect the conviction that it is enough to trust the plan of God to refute the deathly plans of others. In God's world, we are not helpless in the face of such schemes. The purposes of God supersede the best human plans.

In these days of late September each of us in one way or another is faced with new circumstances requiring new assurances. Not so much different from Joseph's older brothers making the journey to Egypt. The assurances continue to come from God. God continues to weep and to forgive. And we continue to receive the gracious Word, Jesus the only begotten Son. He comes to us in the words and water of Holy Baptism, and in the Eucharistic bread and wine of Holy Communion, and in the gospel Word proclaiming forgiveness for you and for me. Christ Jesus breaks the cycle of sin and death allowing for Genesis, beginnings, dreams. With God's love in Christ Jesus beginnings do flow forth from broken deadly cycles giving life for relationships, and family, and community, providing a future that is often beyond imagination.

Amen.

FIRST READING: Genesis 50:15-21

[not printed]

Psalm 103:[1-7] 8-13**SECOND READING: Romans 14:1-12**

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions.

²Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. ³Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. ⁴Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

⁵Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds.

⁶Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

⁷We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. ⁸If 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. ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹For it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall give praise to God.”

¹²So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

GOSPEL: Matthew 18:21-35

Peter came and said to [Jesus,] “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” ²²Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

²³“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

Next Sunday's Readings: Jonah 3:10—4:11; Psalm 145:1-8; Philippians 1:21-30; Matthew 20:1-16.

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