



Daily Reflections

March 26, 2019

Scripture

Matthew 18: 21-38

Peter approached Jesus and asked him,
"Lord, if my brother sins against me,
how often must I forgive him?

As many as seven times?"

Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.
That is why the Kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king
who decided to settle accounts with his servants.

When he began the accounting,
a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount.
Since he had no way of paying it back,
his master ordered him to be sold,
along with his wife, his children, and all his property,
in payment of the debt.

At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said,
'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.'

Moved with compassion the master of that servant
let him go and forgave him the loan.

When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants
who owed him a much smaller amount.

He seized him and started to choke him, demanding,
'Pay back what you owe.'

Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him,

'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

But he refused.

Instead, he had him put in prison
until he paid back the debt.

Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened,
they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master
and reported the whole affair.

His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant!
I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to.
Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant,
as I had pity on you?'

Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers
until he should pay back the whole debt.

So will my heavenly Father do to you,
unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart."

Our Scripture Reflection

Peter is a bit full of himself when he approaches Jesus with his question about forgiving others. The Jewish Law held that one forgive an offender three times and four at the most. Peter is thinking he is quite generous in his willingness to forgive as many as seven times. That is until the Lord set him straight. Forgiveness is to be given an unlimited number of times. Why? Because we have been forgiven numerous times. Jesus teaches us that forgiveness is not an option for the true disciple.

Food for your Journey

Too often we think forgiveness is important, even critical, because of how it affects the person being forgiven.

No, it is not important for only that reason.

Forgiveness is important because it primarily benefits the one offering the forgiveness. Forgiveness only benefits the one being forgiven IF that person is repentant, wants to reconcile, is willing to provide restitution and, has asked for absolution.

Otherwise, forgiveness is about YOU. ... Henry Ward Beecher said in his Life Thoughts that being able to forgive but not forget is just another way of saying "I cannot forgive." Beecher is wrong.

Forgiveness is not saying "Forget it."

Forgiveness is not saying "I forget."

Forgiveness is not saying "It's okay."

Rather, forgiveness is saying "I'm okay, and I am willing to let God deal with whether you are okay, and I am also willing to let go of my need to be the tool of correction and rebuke in your life." ...

Forgiveness is not saying "I no longer feel the pain." Rather, forgiveness is saying "I no longer feel the need to hold on to your involvement in my pain."

--Timothy Merrill, Learning to Fall: A Guide for the Spiritually Clumsy, timothymerrill.net. 106ff. Kindle loc. 2246ff.

A Prayer from the Heart

Dear God, When I am faced with the decision about forgiving someone who has hurt me deeply, help me to remember those times when I received forgiveness from You, especially when I didn't deserve such a generous gift. May I graciously give the gift I have received. Amen