

FAITH @ HOME

Week of September 13, 2020

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Matthew 18:21-35

REFLECT: This week's Gospel text is a parable. A parable is a story that Jesus tells in order to teach a lesson. In this parable, we learn about the importance of loving others by forgiving them. We are also reminded that we love others because Jesus first loves us.

Do you think it's easy or hard to forgive other people? Sometimes it's hard to forgive others, especially when you are hurt, or you don't think someone deserves it. However, Jesus reminds us in this week's story that forgiveness is important. And, we don't forgive others just once. Jesus reminds us to keep on forgiving. We forgive others because we ourselves receive forgiveness. Day after day, we receive God's love, even when we don't think we deserve it. Our job is to share that love with other people!

This week, give thanks to God for loving and forgiving you. Then, share that love and forgiveness with others.

RESPOND: How much is it to forgive someone "seventy-seven" times? Gather 77 pieces of something: pieces of cereal for a snack, pieces of candy, pennies, or something else. Look at your pile of objects. How does seeing the size of this pile make you feel? How does Jesus help us forgive others this much (and more?) How does it feel to know that you are forgiven this much (and more?)

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: VICTORIA HOPPES



Victoria Hoppes is the Director of Youth and Children's Ministries at Resurrection Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Indianapolis, Indiana. She also serves as the Project Coordinator for Faith @ Home. She has ministry experience with youth, family, and camping programs at both the parish and diocesan levels. She holds degrees from Texas Lutheran University and Luther Seminary. She also holds a certificate in Youth and Family Ministry from Forma's certificate program. You can follow Victoria on her website, www.ministryincontext.com, or on social media (@vlhoppes).

Faith @ Home is a ministry of



FAITH @ HOME

Week of September 13, 2020

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Matthew 18:21-35

REFLECT: Seventy-Seven times! That is a lot! Have you ever done anything seventy-seven times? Seventy-seven jumping jacks? Seventy-seven laps around your house? Seventy-seven glasses of water? Now Jesus probably didn't mean exactly seventy-seven times but used this number as a play on Peter's question. Like ourselves, Peter learns that forgiveness is VERY important to Jesus. And to make sure Peter (us) understand how important forgiveness is, Jesus again tells a harsh story to drive home the point. I imagine, like me, you read this story and it makes you squirm or shiver. But this story is harsh on purpose. Jesus tells this story so we know how important forgiveness is. Jesus tells this story to remind us that we too are forgiven and that we should also forgive not seven, but seventy-seven times! Jesus, once again, uses story so that the disciples, so that we, learn what kingdom of heaven looks like. And we learn that forgiveness is a major part of kingdom living.

RESPOND: In the Lord's Prayer, we say "Forgive us our sins/trespasses as we forgive those who have sinned/ trespassed against us." We all miss the mark. We all have moments when we do not live into God's dream for us. In this prayer, we ask God to forgive us and pray for the courage and strength to also forgive. This week in your prayers, say the Lord's Prayer. Maybe you want to pause on this line. During these moments of pause, thinking about things you would like to have forgiveness from. Think about people you need to forgive. Forgiving is not always easy in fact, most times forgiving is hard! But as God as our model and source of strength, forgiveness is possible.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MALCOLM MCLAURIN



Malcolm is a seminarian out of the Diocese of Olympia and is currently a senior The University of the South: School of Theology in Sewanee, TN. His background is in children's, youth, and young adult ministry. His 20+ years of experience has taken him from Mississippi and Arkansas to California and Washington. He is a husband and father of two wonderful boys.

Faith @ Home is a ministry of



FAITH @ HOME

Week of September 13, 2020

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Matthew 18:21-35

REFLECT: Can you imagine an app that would track how many times you've forgiven someone? When it hits 77, you receive a notification so you know you no longer have to forgive that person. Ding! Forgiveness complete.

While that might be taking this passage literally and while such an app would be nice, by doing so we would miss what the Gospel invites us to do.

Seven is a word in the Scriptures that indicates completion. The number 77 then is less about the actual number of times someone messes with us and more the posture of offering forgiveness.

This story demonstrates the generous nature of God's forgiveness. Since the person's debts were forgiven, we might think that the person would, in turn, forgive those who owed them. Instead, the forgiven person goes out and does not respond in kind.

Since we are forgiven much, we keep forgiving. The invitation is to focus on forgiving, of giving what has been given to us instead of waiting for a notification that tells us we've forgiven enough.

RESPOND: A forgiveness app does exist (<https://iforgiveyou.com.au/>). Check out this app. How might something like this help or not help you be a person who forgives? What would you make sure a forgiveness app had or did not have if you were creating one?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: HOLLY ZAHER



The Rev. Holly Rankin Zaher serves as Rector for St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Evansville, IN. For 30 years, Holly has helped people think and reflect on what it means to be church in today's culture in the Episcopal Church as a lay youth ministry professional and as a priest. If Holly isn't hanging out with her husband or three kiddos, she's probably somewhere reading, hiking, or making things out of yarn.

Faith @ Home is a ministry of



FAITH @ HOME

Week of September 13, 2020

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Matthew 18:21-35

REFLECT: Forgiveness doesn't come as easily to me as I want it to – instead, I have to work hard at releasing, letting go and moving on from the things I've done and the things that have been done to me. Because if I don't, I've learned the hard way how easily walls of resentment grow in my soul. And perhaps like me, if resentment has ever been your story, you know that it's no way to live.

But through God's love we are not only forgiven but we are commanded to forgive others, "not seven times, but ... seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:22, NRSV). Like Peter, I want a quick answer to my problems, a one-and-done solution of forgiving my brother or sister seven times and being done with the whole ordeal. But Jesus' response shows us that forgiveness is a bigger act of holy multiplication: over and over again, we forgive and we release – we let go of the anger and the sadness we've let harden within us, and we seek a most supernatural kind of peace. Then, we continue in the active act of forgiveness until healing really, actually happens.

RESPOND: Let's make tangible our response to this week's passage on forgiveness. Grab a blank piece of paper and a pen; in the center of the paper, copy down Matthew 18:21-22, which include Peter's question and Jesus' response. Draw a circle around those words, then return to your high school English class and create a bubble diagram of sorts. Out of the "walls" of the circle, draw a line to a name of someone you need to forgive or need to receive forgiveness from. Continue to draw lines of forgiveness until you run out of names. Let this act of petition be your prayer today, as you dwell on next steps of moving forward with these names and with forgiveness.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: CARA MEREDITH



Cara Meredith is a writer and speaker from Seattle, Washington. Her memoir, *The Color of Life: A White Woman's Journey Toward Love and Justice*, released in 2019 (Zondervan). You can connect with her on her website (<https://www.cameredith.com/>) and on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (@cameredithwrites).

Faith @ Home is a ministry of

