

**Homily for September 13, 2020, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Des Moines © Steve Godfrey**  
Matthew 18:21-35

In the **Lord's Prayer**, we pray "**Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.**"

- Sometimes this line gives me pause:
  - **Can I really forgive others as God forgives me?** That seems like a tall order.
- The disciples seemed concerned about that too, so Peter asked:
  - **How many times do I really have to forgive** that bully who keeps hurting me?
    - 7 times?!
    - Jesus replies: 77 or 490 (70x7)! Infinitely, eternally.

**How can we possibly do that?**

- It's all about **gratitude and generosity**.
- **God is endlessly grateful for us**, and infinitely generous in forgiving
  - The "king" forgave a \$5 billion debt – an unimaginable amount
- We just have to share that love that God has given us
  - And forgive a \$10,000 debt – big, but definitely imaginable.
- We are called to **be generous with the generosity God has given us**

I once heard a monk preach about this. He told a story of another monk (or maybe it was not another monk!) who had a real beef with one of his brothers. He prayed to God to be able to forgive his brother, but it just wouldn't happen. He became frustrated that he couldn't forgive as Jesus teaches us to forgive. Then in the process of reflecting on and confessing his own sins he had a profound sense of freedom and gratitude for God's forgiveness and love. Suddenly he realized that he did forgive his brother and it was really not difficult at all.

We **tend to focus on the problem** and challenge of forgiving one another, as if it's up to us. It's much more effective to focus on God's love and forgiveness of us.

- Forgiveness flows from awareness of God's grace.
- We can't *make* it happen.
- **We let it happen** when **we embrace God's love** of us.

If you need to forgive someone (and don't we always need to!) ...

- Set that problem aside and pray to God for forgiveness for yourself.
- Take a moment after this sermon to consider what troubles your heart, what causes you separation from God and others. Do this regardless as a matter of practice, before confessing sins, before approaching the altar.
- See how infinitely generous and gracious and forgiving God is in this parable!
- Just let that sink in and give thanks (the unforgiving slave missed this crucial step).
- Worship and praise God for the many, awesome ways God has loved and saved us.
  - This is why worship is so important!
    - "Eucharist" means great "thanksgiving" for God's love and forgiveness.
    - We aren't ethical machines.
    - We need the process and practice of prayer, thanksgiving, and praise.
- Then **see if that gratitude might overflow** into enough grace & forgiveness for others.

**Do you know how grateful God is for you,** how much God loves you, how much God forgives you?

**How might you celebrate God's infinite love & forgiveness so much that your gratitude overflows** and helps you to love and forgive others?