

15th Sunday after Pentecost, September 17, 2017

14th Sunday after Trinity, Proper 19(24)

LUTHERAN

LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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“Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Parma” or “Harold Weseloh”**

September 14, 2017 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44130

Presented as a part of the bible study/worship at a weekday service (currently on Fridays at 7:00pm) in a house church setting, bi-weekly at an assisted living site, St. Philip Lutheran Church, Cleveland (Sundays at 11:00am) and used by Lutherans in Africa.



<https://vimeo.com/tag:matthew+18%3A21-35>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 501 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) Not Listed

“Come down, O love divine”

“**Bianco da Siena**, born at Anciolina, in the Val d'Arno, date unknown. In 1367 he entered the Order of Jesuates, consisting of unordained men who followed the rule of St. Augustine. This order was instituted in that year by one John Colombinus of Siena, and suppressed by Pope Clement IX. in 1668. Little is known of Bianco beyond the fact that he is said to have lived in Venice for some years, and died there in 1434. His hymns were published at Lucca, in 1851, and edited by T. Bini, under the title, *Laudi spirituali del Bianco da Siena...*”

https://hymnary.org/person/Siena_Bd

“**Ralph Vaughan Williams**, (12 October 1872 – 26 August 1958) was an English composer of symphonies, chamber music, opera, choral music, and film scores. He was also a collector of English folk music and song: this activity both influenced his editorial approach to the *English Hymnal*, beginning in 1904, in which he included many folk song arrangements set as hymn tunes, and also influenced several of his own original compositions.

Ralph Vaughan Williams was born on 12 October 1872 in *Down Ampney**, Gloucestershire...

https://hymnary.org/person/VaughanWilliams_Ralph

*(In case you wondered where the name of the melody came from...)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2v5wvJbvVQQ> Learn the melody from this video as played on piano. [Andrew Remillard](#)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_Z37niLzY4 Then sing along with the organ. “Here's another of me playing the Organ at All Saints Church and demonstrating another Hymn for Mothering Sunday "Come Down O Love Divine Tune Down Ampney its in Mission Praise Number 89 if Arthur wants to sing along...” [RobCharles1981](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDgStIAfbXU> And finally, a brass quintet and piano. ““Come Down, O Love Divine" pairs a text by the Italian mystic poet Bianco de Siena (c. 1350-1399) with a tune by the towering English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958). Translated by the Anglican cleric Richard F. Littledale (1833-1890), Bianco's hymn is especially appropriate at celebrations of the Holy Spirit (e.g. Pentecost), and it is ideal as a wedding prelude. The first two stanzas are a prayer, beseeching the Holy Spirit's presence in one's life...” [Con Spirito Music](#)

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

Genesis 50:15-21; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Exodus 14:19-31 or Genesis 50:15-21 (Next Week: Isaiah 55:6-9; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Exodus 16:2-15 or Jonah 3:10-4:11)

“These verses conclude this lengthy story. The story began with Joseph’s dreams of greatness that offended his brothers (37:1-11). His brothers responded by selling Joseph into

slavery to members of a caravan headed for Egypt (37:12-28). They then told Jacob that Joseph was dead. Jacob was inconsolable (37:29-36)..." <https://www.sermonwriter.com/biblical-commentary/genesis-5015-21>

God's Good Purposes

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." ¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: ¹⁷ 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.'" And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people^[a] should be kept alive, as they are today. ²¹ So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

- a. [Genesis 50:20](#) Or a numerous people

The conclusion to the Joseph story raises some exciting and far-reaching theological themes. Let us take a look at three of them:

1. **Forgiveness:** Joseph's brothers are terrified now that their father Jacob has died. They are well aware of their sin committed against their brother Joseph. From a human perspective, they expect that he will get even with them, that he will seek revenge. Up to now he was inhibited by his desire not to bring any more grief to his father. Now their father is gone and there is nothing to hold back Joseph from punishing them. They tell Joseph that Jacob's dying wish was that he forgive them. We do not know if that is true. At least, it shows how desperate they were to use every device they knew to persuade Joseph to forgive. Their hopes are fulfilled. Joseph forgives them. The family that has known disruption, favoritism, hostility, and deceit all through the book of Genesis may finally get its act together. There is hope for reconciliation. One marvels at the graciousness of Joseph who is actually able to forgive after all of this.

2. **Suffering for others:** We continue to search for ways to find meaning in our suffering. Sometimes (surely, not always), suffering turns out to be for the benefit of other people. Because Joseph had to bear the suffering of slavery in Egypt, he was in the right place at the right time to save many people from famine...Joseph's suffering had some meaning after all, though he could not see that until he got to the end of the story. Likewise, with enough hindsight, we may find that our suffering, at least in part, has had some benefit for self or others.

3. **God's will and human sin:** Since the story had a happy ending, one might be tempted to say that it was all God's will. God needed Joseph in Egypt to plan for the famine. Did God persuade the brothers to sell him as a slave in order to accomplish God's purposes? Or did the brothers do it on their own, committing a sinful act against their own brother? The Joseph story attempts to say that both are true. The brothers really did sin. It is never nice to sell your brother

as if he were a commodity. Yet God was at work in all of this, even in the sins that humans commit. God is always working toward the good, even when what we do is wrong, hateful, evil.

God does not cause us to sin. Neither does God leave us alone to bear the results of our wrongdoing. Even what seems a disaster, a terrible experience of suffering, can be redeemed by a loving God and changed into something good. This we also know in a deeply profound way in the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

http://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/16-3_Forgiveness/16-3_Simundson.pdf

Daniel J. Simundson, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nb8mi0gjMKw&index=19&list=PLclKuuE3KJDGkG41MbeSW5cW4r9bDFvzf>

A taste of what that day may have been like – “Joseph and the Technicolor Dream Coat”, Andrew Lloyd Webber & Lyrics By Tim Rice

Psalm 103:1-12; RCL, Psalm 114 or Exodus 15:1b-11, 20-21 or Psalm 103:1-7), 8-13(Psalm 27:1-9; RCL, Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45 or Psalm 145:1-8)

“All Those Bagpipes

Of the texts that the lectionary pitches for this Sunday... I suggest letting the first three go by and taking a cut at the fourth. For the preacher or teacher, Psalm 103 (considered as a whole) is the equivalent of a fat pitch, right down the middle, right over the plate...” (continued after the reading)

103 Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!

² Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,

³ who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,

⁴ who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

⁵ who satisfies you with good
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

⁶ The LORD works righteousness
and justice for all who are oppressed.

⁷ He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.

⁸ The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

⁹ He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.

¹⁰ He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.

¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

- ¹² as far as the east is from the west,
 so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
- ¹³ *As a father shows compassion to his children,
 so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.*
- ¹⁴ *For he knows our frame;^[a]
 he remembers that we are dust...*

- a. [Psalm 103:14](#) Or *knows how we are formed*

Psalm 103: Structure and Genre

Psalm 103 is based on the two elements of the *hymn of praise* (see Psalm 113 for an example) with *calls to praise* in verses 1-2a and 20-22 supported by *reasons for praise* in 2b-4, 6-10, 11-14, 15-18, and 19. We begin by tracing the movement of the psalm as a whole.

Don't Forget What God has Done for You! (103:1-5)

The expression "Bless the LORD, O my soul" that frames Psalms 103 and 104 has the sense of a charge to oneself: "Now praise the LORD!" Instead of saying "remember the good things God has done" (Psalms 104 and 105) this psalm says "Don't forget what God has done." It is one thing for a busy husband or wife to forget a birthday or an anniversary. It may be that it is even easier for an over-stressed citizen of the 21st century to forget about God!...

The psalmist reminds us of the everyday benefits God gives: forgiveness, healing, saving from hell ("the Pit"), capping it all off with steadfast love (Hebrew, *hesed*) and mercy. There is more: "Don't forget that God satisfies you with a lifetime of good things and even provides you with those times of renewal, when you feel strong and vigorous and once again young. The imagery here is heroic: "so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." (verse 5)

Amazing Grace (103:6-18)

This section falls into three parts, each of which contains the word *hesed*, translated in the NRSV as "steadfast love" (verses 8, 11, 17) and equivalent to "Amazing Grace" in Christian hymnody. This section of the psalm offers a short course on what *hesed* means:

1. Verses 6-10 speak of the *inclusive* nature of the Lord's steadfast love which works justice for "all who are oppressed." Verse 7 recalls the exodus event, the central act of God's deliverance in the Old Testament and a working out of God's *hesed*. Verses 8-10 speak of God's steadfast love as a *forgiving* love. The assertion in verse 8 is like a creed that stands at the center of the entire psalm (see also Exodus 34:6). The Hebrew root behind the words translated "mercy" in verse 4, "merciful" in verse 8, and "compassion" (twice) in verse 13 is *rechem* which means "womb." Thus the picture behind these words is the kind of affection a mother has for the child of her own womb.

Verse 10 indicates that God's steadfast love is *undeserved*. The Lord does not deal with us according to the readout of a cosmic computer keeping track of our acts, but with the kind of love that a mother has for her own child.

2. Verses 11-14 offer three pictures illustrating the nature of God's *hesed*. That love is high as the sky and wide as the distance from east to west! Another picture: that love is like the love of a father for his children; the story of God as "waiting Father" in Luke 15 expands upon this notion. Finally, that *hesed* loves us knowing that we are weak and insignificant; after all, dust was our beginning and is our destiny (Genesis 2:7; 3:19; Psalm 104:29).

3. Verses 15-18 provide yet another angle on the Lord's *hesed*. God's steadfast love is *everlasting*, in contrast to our lives which are *temporary*. We mortals are like grass that is here one day and blown away the next. The old hymn has it right:

we blossom and flourish like leaves on the tree,
and wither and perish, but naught changeth thee.
(Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise)...

This is one of the most popular of the psalms, appropriate especially for times of gratitude or of repentance. It occurs frequently in the lectionary and has inspired hymns such as "Praise to the Lord." Especially attractive is the setting, "Bless the Lord," in the still-popular 1972 musical, *Godspell*.

And who can forget the sounds of all those bagpipes at public funerals in our day, sending out the central theme of this psalm, "Amazing Grace!"

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=655 **James Limburg**
Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn

Romans 14:1-12; RCL, the same reading (Philippians 1:12-14, 19-30; RCL, Philippians 1:21-30) Today is the final reading from Romans.

"In the early church, Christians often disagreed with each other and created problems for one another. In Romans 14:1—15:13, Paul addresses this issue. First, he deals with differences of opinion regarding rules about food and days (14:1-12). He then asks Christians not to cause one another to stumble (14:13-23). He then tells them to focus on pleasing the other person instead of themselves (15:1-6). Finally, he makes it clear that the Gospel is for Jews and Gentiles alike (15:7-13).

Paul is more concerned about the manner in which we deal with differences than about the fact that we have differences. Christ does not require us to agree on every issue, but he does call us to love one another. In chapters 14-15, Paul provides guidance regarding the actions that loving Christians must take—even when they strongly disagree..."

<https://www.sermonwriter.com/biblical-commentary/romans-141-12>

Do Not Pass Judgment on One Another

14 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. ²One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ³Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. ⁴Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master^[a] that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

⁵One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷For none of us lives to himself, and none of

us dies to himself. ⁸ For 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. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

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

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess^[b] to God.” (Cited from Isa. 45:23)

¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

- a. [Romans 14:4](#) Or *lord*
- b. [Romans 14:11](#) Or *shall give praise*

“...Differences in how we follow our consciences always have the potential to threaten our fellowship as believers in Christ. A story about Ruth Graham, wife of the famous evangelist, illustrates how differences can threaten our unity. Mrs. Graham, dressed and made up as would seem fitting for any American woman in the 1970s, attended a luncheon with wives of conservative pastors in Germany. These German Christians had more conservative ideas regarding how women should look. They did not believe that married Christian women should wear makeup or clothing that made them look too much like the world. As a result, a German pastor's wife, sitting across from Ruth Graham, became very upset. She thought it was shameful that the wife of this famous evangelist looked so worldly. Why, Ruth Graham was even wearing mascara! The German pastor's wife became so angry that she started crying right into her beer. Meanwhile Ruth Graham couldn't understand why the woman was crying, although it bothered her that a self-respecting pastor's wife was drinking beer at a meeting to prepare for an evangelistic crusade where Christians come together as the unified body of Christ...

One summer I went on a short missions trip to rural Guatemala. I knew that men weren't supposed to wear short pants, so on the first day at our ministry site--a Sunday--I was out in long pants, playing soccer with some village boys. My team leader came out and said, "Mark, there are some pastors here who are asking why you, a participant in this conference, are playing a competitive game like soccer on a Sunday." It turned out that the believers to whom we were ministering thought there was something wrong with competitive sports. They would not think of playing soccer on a Sunday! It was like Paul said here in 14:5--one person places one day above the others while another person views all days alike. On that Sunday in Guatemala, I had to respect the sensibilities of the pastors who were there and walk off the field...

Paul says that if both sides are doing their action "for the Lord," then both positions are valid and must be respected (14:6). Is Paul saying that I have to curtail my freedoms because of others' sensitivities? For relationships within the church, this is exactly what Paul is saying and confirmed by his words on verses 7-9, that we, like Christ, are not living for ourselves. We are here to live for the Lord.

Another reason Paul gives for respecting the behavior of others' in indifferent matters is that each believer will stand before God in judgment. It is not for us to judge other people. If they can perform their activities in good conscience for the Lord, then we can let them continue...

Jesus said, "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged" (Matthew 7:1). Paul is applying Jesus' words to differences within the church. His goal for our church is presented in his benediction in Romans 15:5-6, that instead of using our words to despise or judge others in our fellowship, we glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ "with one voice!"

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=130 [Mark Reasoner](#)
Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Bethel University, St. Paul, MN

For a detailed historical context of this reading go to:

<https://modernlectionaries.blogspot.com/2014/09/the-inconsequential-paul-this-flap-over.html>

“The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 18th Chapter”

“Glory to You, O Lord”

Matthew 18:21-35; RCL, the same reading (Matthew 20:1-16; RCL, the same reading)

“...This particular parable in Matthew 18:23-35, which compares the kingdom of heaven to a king who is intent on settling his debts, is neither opaque nor particularly difficult to translate for the modern context. God as banker, parent, or even loan shark, works to convey the same harsh irony of the story in which a king forgives much but the one of whom much is forgiven forgives nothing. This parable is in no way unclear, or difficult to comprehend (unlike the parable of the lost sheep which is counter-intuitive; the parable of the sower which needs explanation in the text of the gospel itself; or the treasure hidden in a field which is almost nonsensical)... (continued after the reading)

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

²¹ Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “**I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.**

²³ “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.^[a] ²⁴ When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.^[b] ²⁵ And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the servant^[c] fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii,^[d] and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹ So his fellow

servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³² Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers,^[e] until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

- a. [Matthew 18:23](#) Or *bondservants*; also verses [28](#), [31](#)
- b. [Matthew 18:24](#) A *talent* was a monetary unit worth about twenty years' wages for a laborer
- c. [Matthew 18:26](#) Or *bondservant*; also verses [27](#), [28](#), [29](#), [32](#), [33](#)
- d. [Matthew 18:28](#) A *denarius* was a day's wage for a laborer
- e. [Matthew 18:34](#) Greek *torturers*

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

“With that in mind I offer two different thoughts about forgiveness in conversation with the parable of the unforgiving servant.

First. Forgiveness in this parable is both an extravagant and a precious thing. An equation of the respective debts that are in play here can be helpful. A "talent" is a measure of weight, close to about 130 lbs, which could be used for gold and silver (and presumably other precious metals). In monetary terms then the talent has to do with a weight of (most likely) silver, and was roughly equal to about 15 years worth of wages for the typical worker. The king in our parable is owed 10,000 talents, or about 150,000 years worth of income, which works out to more than 3,000 financial life sentences.

This is no little debt. A denarius (plural = denarii) is a small silver coin that was roughly the daily wage for the typical worker. The slave in our parable is owed 100 denarii. This is no trifling debt, but neither is it earth-shattering. As the parable is essentially comparative, comparing the relative values of debts owed might serve to bring the point of parable more sharply to bear.

One talent is equal to 5,475 denarii. In the backwards thinking of the king the equation looks like this: $T \times 10^4 < FS$; where FS is the life of the forgiven slave, and T is the talent, the wages of sin. In the kingdom of heaven forgiveness is exponentially powerful. Even 10,000 talents worth of guilt and debt are counted as nothing compared to the new life of the forgiven sinner.

In the backwards thinking of the unforgiving servant the equation is reversed when it is applied to someone else: $US < d \times 10^2$; where US is the life of the unforgiven slave, and d is the denarius, the debt the first slave clings to as his right. To put the comparative equation simply, in the eyes of the sinner 100 coins are more precious than the life of another human being; in the eyes of God 54,750,000 coins (the equivalent value of 10,000 talents in denarii) are nothing

to be considered next to the fate of the sinner. Forgiveness, as laid out in this parable, is extravagant in the extreme, and more precious by far than the wages of sin.

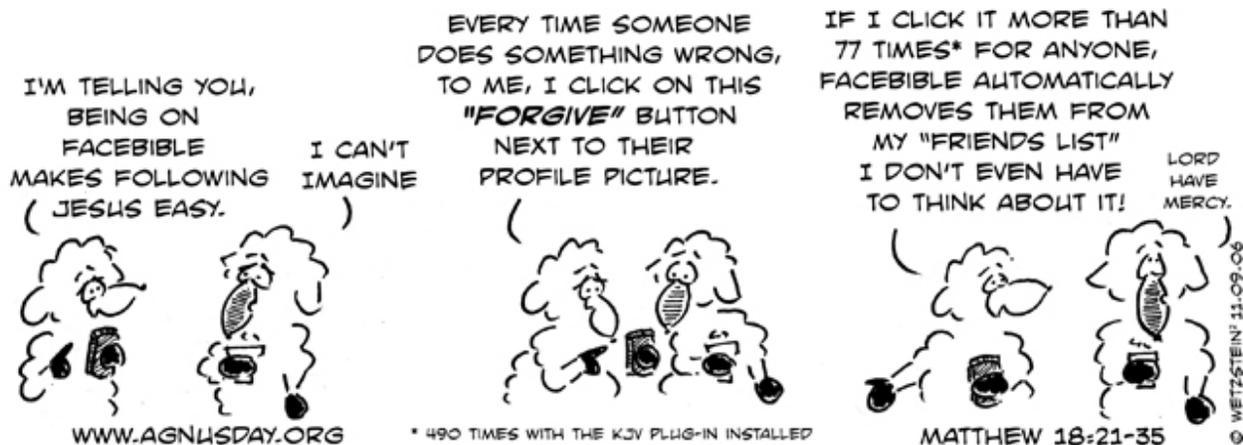
Second. Forgiveness in the Gospel of Matthew is not only relational it is reciprocal and reliant. When teaching his disciples to pray Jesus would have us say, "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). This fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer is echoed in the lesson of this parable about the kingdom, reflecting it back in reverse. We ought to forgive as our King has forgiven us, Jesus says.

In answering the disciples' request for help in praying Jesus teaches them that forgiveness -- both the giving and the receiving of it -- is reciprocal, one cannot have it without doing it. "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15). In answering Peter's request for help in understanding how far forgiveness needs to go Jesus teaches that God's forgiveness surpasses both our deserving and our comprehension of it; we who have first been forgiven must, therefore and thereupon, forgive those who have wronged us so much more lightly.

The point of this parable is clear, and its demands both in the context of the Gospel of Matthew and its application in our congregations today is urgent. Forgiveness lies at the heart of our faith in God and our love of one another. Forgiveness, which we receive from God our King in the person of Jesus is what our King expects from his subjects in their dealings with each other.

Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors; as a prayer this puts the emphasis on what we will receive in turn for the forgiveness we have offered. Forgive your brother or sister from your heart; the parable turns the tables, teaching us that we have been first forgiven and encouraging us to forgive in turn. Taken together, this is a composite picture of the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom we practice, both of which are driven by forgiveness

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1040 [Karl Jacobson](#)
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