

Eternally Embraced in Mercy and Forgiveness

Twenty-fourth Week of Ordinary Time – Matthew 18: 21-35

September 17, 2017

The life of a Christian is not measured in days, weeks or years. It is measured eternally. From the moment of our baptism, we are a new creation. We are baptized into the life of Christ which is a life that lasts long after our earthly residence. The gospel for this twenty-fourth week of Ordinary Time answers, in parable, Peter's inquiry into how often we must forgive.

Peter approached Jesus and asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?" Peter believes he has exaggerated the answer beyond what even Jesus will see as needed. Instead, Jesus turns the table on Peter's inquiry. **Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times."**

For Jesus, forgiveness is the only way for the Christian to live. God's forgiveness and mercy is an endless response to the human condition, namely our self-centered and enormous egos. Since God forgives us our transgressions then we must in turn forgive others. This is the only way to true freedom of heart and spirit. Being forgiven by God is only half the equation. If we wish to be truly free in heart and spirit we must be willing to forgive those who have wronged us.

Jesus tells the story of a servant who could not repay his debt to his master. **"Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan."** However, when this same servant had the opportunity to forgive one of his fellow servants a far less amount, he took the opportunity to seek reprisal. **"He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, Pay back what you owe."**

Jesus is very clear this week that our duty, as his followers, is to seek and practice mercy and forgiveness. We will be held accountable to how we live our lives especially in how we treat those who have wronged us and those we have wronged. It is God's mercy and love that allows us to respond to this call to be eternally embraced in mercy and forgiveness.

Blessings!


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