

Gospel

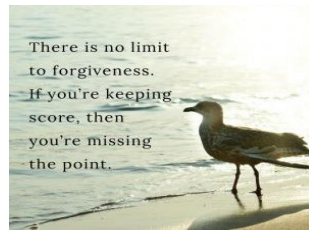
The 24th Sunday of Ordinary Time Year C (Matthew 18:21-35)

Peter went up to Jesus and said, 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?' Jesus answered, 'Not seven, I tell you, but seventy times seven times.' And so, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. When the reckoning began, they brought him a man who owed ten thousand talents; but he had no means of paying, so his master gave orders that he should be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, to meet the debt. At this, the servant threw himself down at his master's feet. "Give me time" he said "and I will pay the whole sum." And the servant's master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the debt. Now as this servant went out, he happened to meet a fellow servant who owed him one hundred denarii; and he seized him by the throat and began to throttle him. "Pay what you owe me" he said. His fellow servant fell at his feet and implored him, saying, "Give me time and I will pay you." But the other would not agree; on the contrary, he had him thrown into prison till he should pay the debt. His fellow servants were deeply distressed when they saw what had happened, and they went to their master and reported the whole affair to him. Then the master sent for him. "You wicked servant," he said "I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me. Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?" And in his anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt. And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.'



And in his anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt. And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.'

Reflection:



In our Gospel this week Jesus talks about forgiveness – about how God is always ready to forgive us if we say sorry. And about how we should try to forgive others if they say sorry to us.

Peter asks Jesus how many times we should forgive each other. He proposes what he thinks is a reasonable amount of times – seven! Jesus then tells the parable of the unforgiving servant to prove that God's mercy for us is limitless and His forgiveness is never-ending. In the story, the king is moved by the humility of the pleading servant so he forgives his debt. The king represents God – who is always ready to be patient, merciful and forgiving with us if we ask, and if we try to change our ways. When the servant has the opportunity to return the act of forgiveness to a fellow servant, he shows no mercy and sends the man to prison for owing him a very small debt! The servant is like us – we sometimes find it hard to change our ways, to stop doing what we know is wrong. When the king hears about the actions of the unforgiving servant, he punishes the servant because he refused to show the kind of mercy he had himself received. Jesus is telling us that forgiveness is not just about quantity—the number of times we forgive one another. It's about the depth of our forgiveness and how we behave in future. We should forgive one another from the heart.



God's forgiveness transforms us, helping us to be as forgiving and merciful as God is towards us. Jesus is saying don't keep a record, just keep on forgiving. In this way we demonstrate God's love and forgiveness to the world.

Post-it Challenge:

- Can you think of a time when you have been forgiven? How did you feel?
- Can you think of a time when someone has said sorry and tried to change and you did forgive them? How did you feel then?

Now reflect on the promises of Psalm 103.

**'As high as the sky is above the earth,
So great is his love for those who honour him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far does he remove our sins from us.'**
What do these words tell us about God?



Let us pray:

God of love, help us to share your forgiveness with others. You know all our sins and failures, our weaknesses and temptations. Forgive us, accept us and strengthen us. Guide us to do what is right so that we can make this world a better place for all who live in it. Amen

