LECTIO DIVINA

Living the Word

A WEEK'S JOURNEY WITH THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Year A - 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

A companion for encountering Jesus' love in everyday life.



Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

You are invited to **read** the Gospel passage slowly, attentively, respectfully and reverently as a gift of God.

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-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 the 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."

Background to Gospel passage

Where does it happen? The setting is Capernaum, possibly the home of Simon Peter, regarded by many to be the place where Jesus lodged when he was not on the road.

When does this happen? Jesus is in conversation with his disciples, responding to their questions and preparing them for the mission ahead.

Who is there? Peter, who raises the question of 'forgiveness' with Jesus. In the parable itself, the main characters are the 'generous king' and the 'ungrateful servant'.

What happens? The passage has two sections. In the first, Peter asks how far the call to forgive extends—how often must he forgive someone who wrongs him? In the second, through the parable of the unmerciful servant, Jesus reveals the sheer gift of God's forgiveness and the call to extend that same forgiveness to others. Those who have truly received God's mercy are invited to become merciful themselves. When forgiveness is withheld, resentment and bitterness can take hold, leaving us imprisoned in misery.

Recognising Stage (Meditate)

- **Trust in the power of the Holy Spirit** at work within you.
- Enter into the passage: **Where do you feel drawn? What touches you? What does it remind you of?**
- **Let the Gospel and your memories speak** to each other.
- Notice the same loving presence of **Jesus at work** again today **in yourself and in others**.
- If needed, use the following prompts to awaken such memories.

"The servant's Master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the debt."
The Master is compassionate and generous in forgiveness. When have you experienced or offered such generous forgiveness?
Or
"were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?"
The Master expects one who has received such generous forgiveness to extend it to others. Recall a time when you received compassion, understanding or forgiveness, yet struggled to offer the same to someone who had wronged you.
Or
"he had him thrown into prison till he should pay the whole debt."
The Master reveals the cost of refusing to forgive. Can you recall a time when resentment and bitterness left you feeling imprisoned because you could not forgive someone from the heart?

What memories come back to you? Listen deeply to your own life experience. Where was it? When was it? Who was there? What happened?
(Some might find it helpful to journal their memory.)

I remember the time when…

Gen.25:16, 'Truly God was in this place and I didn't see it,' until now!

Prayer Response

You are invited to respond in your own words, and where possible, together with some words from the passage.

Let the prayer flow from your recognition of the passage, or any part of it, in life experience. You might find it helpful to journal your prayer.

Tell your Father how this passage and the memories it has evoked have awakened gratitude for the presence of Jesus in your life and in the world. Heavenly Father, I thank you…

The Gospel is always a call to repentance as well. Share with the Father your sorrow for the times when you, or a community you belong to, have fallen short in living this Gospel. Heavenly Father, I am sorry for...

Ask your Father for the help you need to live the Gospel more fully—in yourself, your family, community, Church and world. Heavenly Father, please give us the help we need to…



You are invited to deepen this prayer experience by resting your heart silently in God's presence and love. The quiet repetition of a word or phrase from the passage may help you on this journey to greater stillness and greater silence, e.g. "forgive".

An Invitation to Reflect

From your journey with the passage in meditation and prayer, what new insight or understanding have you received about the true meaning of love or some expression of it, into what it means to be fully human, and how God's kingdom is being made present among us today?

Rest in this truth, hold it in prayer and trust that it will bear fruit in your life.

Thought for the week

The only genuine response to having received the gift of forgiveness is to show the same to others.

Reaction

With God's help I will try to live this Gospel by....



Children

For Primary School Children

Reading: Jesus wants his friends to be people who forgive. He wants people to never grow tired of forgiving others.

Recognising: Can you remember meeting a 'Jesus' person who always forgives you no matter how many times you hurt them or others, perhaps a parent or grandparent?

Draw or write about this Jesus person who has shown you great forgiveness?



Responding

- Father, I thank You for the experience of forgiveness in my life.
- Father, I am sorry for the times that I failed to forgive others.
- Father, I ask for the help to be able to forgive with a heart full of love.

Resting: Remain silent for a few moments with the word 'forgiveness' in your heart.

Reflecting: Forgiveness sets you free.

Reaction: **This week I will try to show love by..**