

Pentecost #15

9/13/20

Matthew 18:21-35

J.V.Trautwein

Celebrate (Introduction)

“In today’s second reading Paul questions why we judge one another, since we all stand before the judgment of God. Yet we do sin against one another, and Jesus’ challenge that we forgive seventy-seven times reveals God’s boundless mercy. When we hear the words of forgiveness in worship we are renewed in baptism to be signs of reconciliation in the world”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“Word of God, Come Down on Earth”](#)

Psalm 103:1-13

- ¹ Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.
- ² Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and do not forget 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 as long as you live^[a]
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.
- ⁶ The Lord works vindication
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 accuse,
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 the heavens are high 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 he removes our transgressions from us.

¹³ As a father has compassion for his children,
so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.

Hymn of Praise: [“For The Beauty of the Earth”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness. Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Genesis 50:15-21](#)

2nd Reading: [Romans 14:1-12](#)

The Gospel: [Matthew 18:21-35](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“Come, Ye Disconsolate”](#)

The Message: ([Video](#))

This past Friday was the 19th anniversary of a day which most of us still remember as if it was only yesterday. The fatal attack of the World Trade Center in New York, the downed airliner in Shanksville, Pa., and the plane crash into the Pentagon by foreign terrorist shook the lives of people all over our country. It brought people together out of fear, anger, and just plain shock. Many at the time saw this day as a time to bring needed unity to a nation which was beginning to realize a society evolving into deep divisiveness. I can still remember conducting a large candlelight vigil in Fell’s Point two days after that tragic day. People were still in a state of shock but also felt a strong sense of unity and hope that the nation would gain a sense of new life.

Even though this could have been a defining moment of positive change in our nation instead it brought war and increasing divisiveness and extremism. The clash between extremism in world religions erupted followed by mistrust, bitterness, and even hatred which have become a breeding ground for prejudices of all kinds. As we are all aware we see the results of this today. Love and forgiveness have been shoved aside leaving life being motivated by revenge, hatred, extremism, and prejudice. The fruits of which are death and destruction for a society.

With all that is going on around us, the pandemic, the natural disasters, as well as the continued injustices, we are experiencing another defining moment in our nation’s history. Will we clear our lives, hearts and minds in order to allow love and forgiveness to be realized so that we will be able to determine truth from fiction, possibilities from failure, hope from hopelessness, future from past? Will we take the moment of trials in order to propel us to a new and better life for all?

The fact is that tragedies in life, whether of man’s making or by nature are defining moments in our lives. The outcome is up to us as to whether we see the possibilities they may bring or not. I have always believed that in every negative there is a positive. How we view life and how we are motivated determines the outcome of any tragedy we may face. We only are able to survive and move forward as a society when our lives are governed by love and forgiveness.

The results of being so motivated are vividly seen in the story of Joseph. Joseph was seen by his brothers as being the favored son of the family. He even received the special robe of many colors distinguishing him from his brothers ordinary work clothes. To say the least his brothers were angry and jealous. This led them to take despicable action of selling him into slavery to some traveling Egyptian merchants out of revenge.

Joseph was a man who had every right to be bitter and full of revenge having experienced the unthinkable of being sold into slavery by his own brothers. This horrible, degrading, inhumane act could have led Joseph to be consumed by revenge and bitterness, but instead He overcame his plight with God's help. In overcoming this horrible act he was able to be successful and contribute positively to the lives of his fellow human beings. Not only that, the ultimate result was he was able to love and forgive his brothers who had sold him into the terrible fate of enslavement. He did not let his life be consumed by being judgmental and revengeful. This would have enslaved him for life even after he had been freed and had become successful. Hate and revenge destroys life for it is all consuming and never ending. No, he not only freed himself from being consumed by revenge but he actually saved the lives of those who sold him into slavery from starvation. Joseph found the power of love and forgiveness in order to save his family, the house of Israel. Thus he found that life had found fulfillment through God's presence in his life which could never have happened if he lived a life full of hate and revenge.

To have revenge is the result of judging others. So often this process of judging is so tainted, flawed, and influence by emotions that the truth is hidden from our eyes. The results are decisions leading to wrongful hurt and destruction. Paul states, "Why do you pass judgment on your brother and sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of the Lord." To stand in judgment of others denies the possibility of truth which only God knows. When there is so much divisiveness and extremism it is so easy caught up in the life of being judge and jury. We see the results of this almost every day. We ourselves can so easily fall prey to snap judgments which become controlling influences in our lives and clouds us from seeing the truth.

The difficult task is to be able to get beyond judging others so that we are able able to comfort and meet the needs of those who have suffered from devastating acts of revenge and life itself. Even more difficult, is to see the root causes and perhaps injustices which have led to desperate measures. We cannot and should not condemn a whole race, nation, religion, or society upon the acts of a fanatical few. Generalization only leads to wrongful judgment and thereby avoiding to find solutions to the root causes which create anger and revenge. The power of forgiveness and reconciliation is to be able to search for the truth through the eyes of love and then helping to right the wrongs which fuel hate and revenge. This is difficult since the truth may lead us first to seek forgiveness for ourselves and then, even more difficult, is to be able to accept this forgiveness. But the results are overwhelming for the power of love and forgiveness can break the cycle of hate, bitterness, and revenge. It can bring hope out of the ashes of despair and turmoil.

It is clear that Jesus recognized this power and that it was the natural outcome of God's love. As long as there is love then forgiveness is limitless and with forgiveness comes new life. Peter found this out when he asked Jesus, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, Seventy-seven times.'" This represented an unlimited number. Jesus even took this love and forgiveness even further when He stated. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to

you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you....” How do you overcome an enemy? Not by trying to destroy him for in trying to do this he remains your enemy. But through love and the power of forgiveness, enemies have the possibility of becoming a friend. Love and forgiveness paves the way for a life giving future.

We are being challenged in so many ways each day. The challenges in some instances involve life or death outcomes. It is so easy to lash out in anger but this gets us only to the point in which we are living today. It gets us nowhere. But, overcoming today’s circumstances is to take heed of Paul’s words, “Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord.” To honor the Lord is to live each new day and face each new challenge not in anger and fear but with a life filled with the love and forgiveness which has been shown us through the good news of Jesus. It is out of such a life that justice will prevail, equality among all will be lived, and the needs of those suffering from hunger and the disasters of life will be met. This is our calling and the future depends on how we live this calling.

Anthem: “[I Believe](#)” Frankie Laine

Offering*

We give thee but thine own, what-e’er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Merciful God, we are held in disbelief at the suffering and destruction which is being experienced this moment by the growing number of wildfires. We pray for favorable weather conditions to help fight these many fires and bring an end to their devastation. Give us the wisdom, the strength, and the ability to help comfort and answer the needs of those suffering so much. Let us be ever mindful that when one suffers all suffer for we all are a vital part of your living creation.

Continue to bring healing and comfort to those affected by the continuance of covid19. Help us to realize that each of us has a role in helping to slow the path of this deadly disease. We continue to pray for your loving presence to lead us through these days of fear, turmoil, and uncertainty as to what tomorrow may bring. May we continue to find hope of a new day in which love and forgiveness reigns.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Pam Ash, Heidi Brackbill, Danny Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Ray Lambert, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Nic Nelson, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Tommy Shimer, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Randy Stephens, Kirk Strobel, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord’s Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you;
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters
Live on knowing God's love,
The joy of living this life of love,
And the peace which only come through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing"](#)

*Offering to be sent to:

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