

24th Sunday in OT

Sept. 13

~~Yesterday~~
(Two days) ago we commemorated the 25th anniversary of 9/11. I was watching some videos of survivor interviews and one of the comments on the video stated for those of a certain generation this is their Pearl Harbor.

This led me to look up to see what survivor interviews of ^{Pearl} ~~Peral~~ Harbor there were, and there was one NBC did about 5 years ago on the 80th anniversary. There were 5 men ranging in age from 99 to 104.

While all spoke of their experiences, as horrific as they were, most stated they have found a way to heal and put it behind them, one of the men though ~~who had been at Peral Harbor~~ stated he would never forgive.

Forgiveness can be difficult.

We hear Peter ask the Lord, "how many times should I forgive my brother?"

If we rely on human nature alone, it is almost impossible, we want to lash out at those who have hurt us or hold on to resentment, but if we rely on God's power and life within us, then it becomes possible.

Paul to the Romans, "none of us lives for oneself or dies for oneself, but if we live, we live for the Lord, if we die, we die for the Lord".

Strong statement, my life my death, all of it is not mine, it belongs to the Lord. It is why practices such as euthanasia are against divine law, our lives are not our own to do with as we wish or for us or another to decide when it ends.

In the beginning of Romans Paul states he is a slave of Christ Jesus. He also states it is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

Christian life is about the surrendering of one's mind, heart, body, soul, everything to the higher power of Christ. Our prayer could be, "Lord do with my life what you want."

Our culture teaches us the opposite, that life is all about our wants and needs. That is a perspective of an infant or very young child, who rightly so, has all its needs met by its parents.

Growing up we learn, or should learn, that life is difficult at times, that life is not all about us. It is what our life in family does teach us, older siblings learn to help care for the younger siblings. It's also in these sibling relationships that we usually have to first learn to say, "I'm sorry" or "I forgive you".

It's how we learn to serve the community.

It comes down to ^{either:} ~~either~~ the ultimate concern is "me" or it's "God".

What is it that prevents us from forgiving people?

It is an intense self-regard. I have been wounded, hurt in some way, and I am not getting over that. It is a self-preoccupation that prevents us from forgiveness.

If I can't forgive someone else, I cannot get on with my mission of doing what God wants me to do because I am focused on my wounded ego, ^{I then} ~~and then~~ look at the other with resentment, rather than recognizing we all fail, we all sin and when we forgive each other, we can look together to God and to what God wants us to do.

When you know my life is not about me, you can more easily forgive harms, because you want to get on with your mission.

Whether we live or die we are the Lords.

It is by being the Lord's, being incorporated into Him, that we can forgive and so be free to do the work of the Lord in the world.

The last verse of the first reading from Sirach, "Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbor; remember the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults." The covenant referred to here seems to be the Mosaic or Sinai covenant.

Forgiveness and love toward neighbor are a covenant obligation, part of one's duty toward the God who has entered into a familial relationship with us.

Now, forgiveness is not saying that the wrong committed is ok and it does not mean forgetting what has happened, but it does mean not holding it against that person. Recognizing that we all have wounded natures, faults and weaknesses, and we all sin. It also means we recognize no one is ever beyond the mercy of God if they repent and turn away from sin, and just as God has forgiven us, we are to forgive others.

Even if the person does not repent or say they are sorry, we can pray ^{for reconciliation,} ~~to forgive the person~~ ^{even if} ~~for our own sake~~. Jesus prayed from the cross: Father forgive them, they know not what they do.

While we may not even want to forgive some people, perhaps that can be a starting point. To ask God to help us to want to forgive, and then, over time, cooperating with his grace, we can forgive.

We practice forgiveness ^{because} ~~as~~ we are made in the image of God, we imitate God ^{when we do so} ~~when we~~ practice forgiveness.

Gospel- Looking at the context of Matthew 18, we see a few verses earlier, Jesus had conferred on his disciples a certain religious authority, the authority to bind and loose, to make judgements on the application of the divine law.

Peter, head of the Apostles who will have the authority to forgive sin, asks Jesus about the freedom with which he should dispense forgiveness.

Some of the commentaries state a more accurate translation of the Greek of Jesus' response is translated "seventy times seven".

— 490
It is likely the number is a symbolic allusion to a famous prophetic passage, Daniel 9:25 which decreed "seventy sevens" of years from the time of Daniel to the coming of the Messiah. It is through our incorporation into Jesus, the Messiah, that we can forgive as God forgives.

Jesus also presents a parable of the debts owed. The meaning of the parable is clear, God is our master to whom we owe an almost incalculable debt, ^{due to His mastery} which he forgives in his compassion for us. The offences of our neighbors towards us are, by comparison, negligible. ~~How can we fail to forgive.~~

The debts in the parable give us a sense of the disparity: the debt the servant owes the king is 10,000 talents, which would translate to about \$8.6 billion, a debt so large the average wage-earner could never pay it off. By contrast, the debt owed to the servant is a hundred denarii, or 100 days wages for a common laborer. While the amount owed to the servant is a significant sum, just as the offenses done to us by others can be serious, however it pales in comparison.

Having experienced the lavish forgiveness of God, we should ^{like} be willing to excuse the offenses of our fellow human beings and in this way become God-like. ~~since forgiveness is a divine attribute~~

The more we grow in forgiveness of others the more we can let go of resentment and be open to the work God has for us in the world.

Sometimes our forgiveness is for personal offenses or even larger ones against a community or nation, but in all of these we seek our good and the good of the other by being willing to forgive, heal, and move together on the mission God has for us.

Relying on God's life within us we can bring his forgiveness to the world around us.