

Study Guide – September 17, 2017

Theme: Forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-35; Genesis 50:15-21; Psalm 103:1-13;)

You will notice this passage begins with Peter's famous question about forgiveness and Jesus' equally famous response. To this exchange is attached a rather straightforward parable about forgiveness and judgment. Together these verses, along with the rest of this week's lectionary readings, create a powerful and forceful call to forgiveness in the Christian community. The concern is the life of the church and the practices necessary to build up a community of faith. At the heart of the practice is forgiveness, not forgetting but forgiving. Likewise, this is not as a one time event (or a seven time event), but as a daily, ongoing practice. While we could focus on the exact number Jesus gives us (some text say 7 x 7, while others say 7 x 70), that debate would take our eye off the main point Jesus is making: a healthy church is one that can practice a never-ending flow of forgiveness and grace. After all, isn't this what God has given us?

Read Isaiah 43:25-26; Psalm 103:1-13; 1 John 1:9

Q: How has God forgiven you? And did you deserve it? Is there an exact number of times you have received forgiveness from God or others?

Q: What does God's forgiveness look like to you? Can you draw or create a visual picture of it? Can you describe it in a poem or a prayer?

Read Matthew 6:9-13; 14-15

Q: How is this version of the Lord's Prayer different from what you say?

Q: What might be the theological reason for Jesus putting forgiveness in the middle?

Read Matthew 8:9:2-8; Luke 7:36-50; John 8:1-11

There are plenty of passages throughout the bible that teach of forgiveness, but in these gospel stories each have something in common to the way Jesus interacts with people.

Q: What do you think is the common thread these gospel stories share, and how might it relate to you, and the message you have received this week?

Read Matthew 18:15-20; Luke 17:3-4; Colossians 3:13; Romans 14:10-12

Write down or name one person that you need to forgive and state why?

Read: Genesis 50:15-21 (or Genesis 37-50 if you want the whole story)

This past week was marked by the 16th anniversary of the September 11th attack on our country. This was a day that not only transformed the United States but created a new world order with new wars and new theological thinking in relationship to politics, God, and forgiveness. I often wondered how those Christian families affected by foreign and domestic terrorism have been able to forgive those who inflicted great harm on their hearts.

Read Matthew 26:28

Read this passage a few times slowly, until you feel like you have it memorized (less than 20 words).

Sit in silence and try to imagine Jesus is speaking them to you. What does his voice sound like? Is it a soft whisper or a confident command? What does the room look like? Are you a main character or someone listening in?

If your mind is busy and you have trouble focusing on this exercise, then I suggest you stare at the passage in your Bible, or focus your attention on an inanimate object, like a cross or a rock. Breathe slowly and allow Jesus' words loop back and forth in your head.

Prayer: My Father in Heaven, may your name forever be cherished in my heart. May your kingdom come and settle here on earth as it is in the heavens. I pray today that you will give me the food I need for the day. And I ask you to forgive me of all that I have done against your will so I might be set free to forgive those who are indebted to me or those who have wronged me. This pain I carry is causing me to sin, and so I pray that you will not bring me into temptation but instead you will deliver me from doing wrong. For you alone are the kingdom, the power and the glory, as you have been, are now and will be forever. Amen.