

Reflections for 13th September 2020

14th Sunday after Trinity

How Many Times?

Over all the years that I have been in church ministry, there are a few incidents that stand out clearly in my memory. I always remember one of the first funerals I took as a curate, when I went to visit the widow of a man who had just died, and found out that they had a son, who lived not far away – but they hadn't spoken to each other for more than ten years. I'm not sure they could even remember what they had argued about, but they had waited for each other to make the first move, to get in touch, or apologise, and be ready to forgive, and all those years were wasted.

Forgiveness is at the heart of our faith, and our calling to follow the way of Jesus – but we all struggle with it at times. And we see the people of God in the Bible often struggling to forgive, and learning at times through painful experience what it means to be ready to forgive. This week's Old Testament reading is the conclusion of the story of Joseph, as he and his brothers are re-united in mutual forgiveness, but behind that there was a long trail of disagreements, jealousies, violence and lies. Joseph and his brothers had a lot that they needed to forgive each other for.

In the gospel reading Peter asked Jesus how many times he had to forgive, but hidden behind that was the question he was really asking –when can I stop forgiving, when have I done enough forgiving. As he often did, Jesus answered with a parable, that you can hear in our story video for this week. His underlying message was that we forgive in response to God's forgiveness of us – and, as there is no end to God's readiness to forgive us, so there is no end to the number of times that we should be ready to forgive one another. For Jesus taught us and all his followers to pray:

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Revd John Waller

Almighty God,
who called your church to bear witness
that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself:
help us to proclaim the good news of your love,
that all who hear it may be drawn to you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Bible readings: Genesis 50: 15-21, Romans 14: 1-12, Matthew 18: 21-35

Story: 'The Unforgiving Servant' (based on this week's gospel reading)