

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost +

The Gospel appointed for this day offers us extraordinary joy and profound sense of hope. In this passage we are to recognize that God our Father will forgive our sins, and desires that we be reconciled to Him. That Jesus is teaching us this lesson only reinforces for us the reality of His role in our Salvation. As He will reconcile us to the Father through the Sacrifice of the Crosstoday He proclaims to us part of the mystery of Salvation, Forgiveness.

The Lord in His teaching also instructs us of the nature of our human relationships and that aspect of this teaching is an extraordinary challenge. This parable of the ungrateful servant should cause each one of us to pause and ponder our own actions.

Have we always accepted the forgiveness of others?

Have we sought to be reconciled with those we have wronged?

Have we judged others harshly and yet judged our own actions by another standard?

The difficulty of this teaching might cause us to be discouraged, even to the point of despair. How can we live under such a standard, how can we always turn the other cheek and meekly accept the undeserved blows that will fall upon us? How can we forgive and forget?

This is where we are drawn even more deeply into the mystery of God and His love for us.

There are two images we need to remember.

The first is Judas hanging from a tree. He has betrayed the Lord. He has lost all hope and in the pit of despair he has hung himself rather than face the continuation of life. He has not sought to be reconciled, trusting in the mercy of God, rather he sees no power in God. Rather, having trusted in his own abilities, he finds himself with no option but to take his life.

The second image is that of St. Peter. Peter the brash and bold one now stands before the Risen Lord. Do you love me Peter, the Lord Asks? He asks Peter not once, but three times. The bold and brash man has been completely humbled. This Peter who three times denied the Lord and failed to live up to the vows he made to stand with Jesus even unto death is completely broken. He has no power within himself and he knows it.

But what is within St. Peter that was not in Judas is faith. (Faith in the Lord and in the power of the Resurrection) As Peter meekly stands before Jesus and accepts the charges laid upon him he feels both the weight of his three denials of Jesus and gift of forgiveness offered to him. He is made whole as Jesus said to him, feed my lambs, tend my sheep and feed my sheep. In these words Jesus is giving to Peter the ministry he sought. This man is now charged and sent forth to be the Apostle Jesus knew he could be when he first named him Peter, the Rock.

It was in the process of acknowledging his sin, his weakness and his faults that Peter is broken. It is accepting the forgiveness offered to him that he becomes what God created him to be. It is the actions that followed the Pentecost event, as the early church forms that the forgiveness of St. Peter and all of the Apostles is made manifest. As in the power of the Holy Ghost their ministry is filled with God's Grace.

It is the power of the Cross and the Sacrifice of Jesus that makes this ministry of reconciliation possible. First that we are reconciled to God and then that we seek to be reconciled one to the other. **This is our great challenge.**

The ungrateful servant is turned inward and his focus is on himself and his own needs. He is not concerned with the needs of other, or even in the relationship he has with his master. Forgiven his debts, he proceeds not to give thanks with his actions in forgiving other, but dishonors himself and his master with what he does. He is judged not to be worthy of the gift of forgiveness.

Each of us has been given the Grace of Faith. Each of us is aware and believes in the power of the Cross and the Sacrifice of Jesus for us. Each of us knows that in the still silent voice that is within us that we are unworthy of the great gift we have been given.

We face a choice; we can struggle each day to be healers and reconcilers we have been called to be. We can try each day to share the great gift of forgiveness that we have received. We can be like St. Peter, recognizing our own faults and failings and yet trusting in the forgiveness of God. We move forward not dwelling on the past, but for forgetting the Love of the Cross either.

Or we can trust in ourselves. We can expect that we can handle any situation and make every decision. We can pretend that we don't need God or the forgiveness He offers to us. And when the moment comes that we face the reality of what we have done and how we have turned away from hope, like Judas, we will find ourselves in pit of despair.

God wants us to choose life. He wants to love us into His kingdom. He has done everything for us that we might be reconciled to him, even dying of the Cross for us. And He wants us to share the faith and the hope we have when we forgive others as we have been forgiven.

AMEN