

Lent Reflection Tuesday 9th March

Matthew 18: 21-35

So..... Forgiveness. It is a difficult word to hear. We often find it difficult to forgive people, especially if someone we love and trust has let us down. Sometimes we find it difficult to forgive ourselves too. This passage is about forgiving those close to us. Peter asks, "how many times must I forgive my brother?"

Peter was being generous when he suggested seven times. Jewish law at the time suggested that three was a good number.

There is debate as to the exact translation of the Greek text. Some say seventy seven others say seventy times seven (490). Either way Jesus is suggesting a number that it is impractical to keep count of. If you are keeping count you are not really forgiving but keeping a record of progress until you can stop forgiving. Jesus is saying that you must always and continually forgive.

The slave in the story owed a huge amount of money. Far more than he could ever hope to pay back. He asked for time to pay but was granted a complete forgiveness of the debt. We would expect him to be grateful and compassionate towards someone who owed him money, but no! He had his fellow slave thrown into prison until he could pay.

When the master heard about this he was furious and handed him over to be tortured until he could pay, which we have already said he could never do.

When we pray the Lord's prayer we say, "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us". Are they just words or do we really understand what we are saying? C.S.Lewis wrote, "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive."

If we fail to forgive we are tied to the bad thing that has happened to us and we cannot move forward.

But forgiveness is a two-way street. If we are to forgive then we must be ready to ask for forgiveness - and believe we are forgiven - up to 77 times. Forgiveness should flow back and forth, to us and from us, to others. It means letting go of our treasured grievances and resentments. They are a burden on us.

In the Lord's prayer Jesus makes forgiveness as central as our daily bread.

The forgiveness that is given to us is for ourselves certainly, but when God is at work there is not just a private benefit but the effects should spread widely.

Let us pray

As we acknowledge that the good in our lives comes from God we pray for the generosity to be a blessing to others.

We pray for the grace to forgive others as we can't do it alone.

We pray for those who have caused us pain.

Thank you Lord for forgiving us 77 times and give us the grace to forgive someone today.

Amen