

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost September 13, 2026

Prayer of the Day

O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness. Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

21 Peter came and said to [Jesus,] “Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” 22 Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

23 “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him, 25 and, as he could not pay, the lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions and payment to be made. 26 So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ 27 And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him by the throat he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ 29 Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ 30 But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. 31 When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. 32 Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ 34 And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. 35 So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

Reflections...

If you think forgiving is costly and difficult, observe how today’s parable startles (scandalizes) us into calculating how much more costly “unforgiveness” can be. If we take the story seriously, vengeance and grudge-holding erode relationships and community life now and the toxins therein follow us into the next life.

Now we recall (as Father Robert Capon reminds us) the person telling the story— Jesus— teaches about restoring relationships, going after lost sheep and at his own execution prays that God will forgive his tormentors. For us personally and for the church at large, Capon’s words about forgiveness put a very perplexing story into perspective,

Forgiveness “is a gift to the totally incompetent, not a reward for the suitably disposed” . Robert Capon, (1988) *Parables of Grace*, Eerdmans Publishing page 40.

Remember Jesus saying that if someone won’t reconcile, let them be to you like an outcast or tax collector? His words. If you didn’t know better you’d think he was writing people off. But we do know what gets Jesus in the hottest water with the religious authorities: befriend outcasts and tax collectors.

Perhaps that’s enough scandal for today....and may the confounding mercy of God find you, bless you and empower you to be merciful when you can.