



Church At Home
St. Timothy's Lutheran Church – Pembroke, Ontario
Pentecost 15 **September 6, 2026**

Prayer of the Day

O Lord God, enliven and preserve your church with your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful, and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you O Lord.

“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you O Christ.

Homily

I greet you in the name of Jesus, our risen Lord. Amen.

There is a story I would like to share with you this morning.

The story is about the man who was stranded all alone, shipwrecked on a desert island. He had been there for a number of months, trying to survive, hoping some ship would sail close enough and notice him and rescue him.

Eventually a ship did notice him and sent a small boat to check on the man; alone on the island. As the small boat from the ship approached the shore, the man ran down to the beach to greet the rescue party. It was such a joyous occasion. He was being rescued!

As those from the rescue party greeted the man, they also noticed all the buildings that had been built on the island. They asked the man: "You are here all alone. And you have so many different small buildings along the shore. Why all these buildings?"

The man responded. "Well, it's been a long time. I had to keep busy. So that building there (pointing) is where I slept.

That building over there is where I would spend the day.

That building is where I fixed my food.

That building is where I go to church."

And pointing to another building, he said, "And that is where I used to go to church."

What makes this story humorous is its truthfulness. As long as God's people have known themselves to be called together in community; to be the church, we have had this seemingly inherent tendency to get frustrated, to separate and to move on from each other. I know some of you are now thinking of our own stories and with sad hearts can agree with what I just said.

Maybe it is a good thing that Jesus has no grandiose illusions about the church and how people struggle to get along. Jesus knows the challenges we face to stay connected to one another. He knows the church consists of real people--and real people come with harsh opinions and tensions that lead toward alienation and disagreements.

Throughout the history of the church, we have seen people leave the church, angry about the church's views on many social issues even over issues like to build or not to build. The church is supposed to be a community of light and hope, peace and joy for all of God's children of the world; yet we have been known to be judgemental and exclusionary.

So, here today, we are given a divine recipe for dealing with troublesome Christians.

Step One: take the offender aside and show him or her the error of their ways.

Step Two: Bring a group to confront the said offender.

Step Three: Shun and or banish unrepentant offender.

Repeat as necessary. There is no best before date!

Read all by itself, this advice is wide open to abuse and being confrontational with members who are back sliding.

Years ago, it was suggested in my homiletics class that it was dangerous to study the Bible verse by verse, paragraph by paragraph. We were taught to read what is going on before and what is going on after the passage you were exploring. If we would take this advice we might view this passage in a different light.

The heart of the eighteenth chapter of Matthew is about forgiveness; how important it is to God; how important it is to us, and about how hard it can be to actually extend and receive it. You may remember some of this chapter and the stories; like how God is like a shepherd and leaves the ninety-nine sheep to find the lost one. Or, when Peter asks Jesus, "how many times must I forgive someone?" Peter suggests seven and Jesus isn't merely satisfied with towing the line but seventy-seven or "about as many times it takes to love your neighbour back into right relationship with you."

The reason forgiveness is so important from God and to and from each other is simple: we screw up. We too often put our wants, needs and desires ahead of those of others. We hurt people. And, people hurt us. You know what I am talking about don't you? There isn't a single

person sitting in this congregation this morning that hasn't been hurt recently by someone and sadly, hasn't hurt someone else too. We complain about someone else, trash them at the safe distance of the comments to a post, trash their reputation via social media or share difficult news via an email rather than face- to-face conversation. In these cases, we fail to take serious the humanity of the person with whom we are in a relationship. That's the world we live in. And so, we screw up!

Jesus however invites a different way. Jesus invites us to love each other enough to speak not just *to* but also *with* each other. It takes backbone to talk to someone you feel is in the wrong. It takes backbone to listen when someone else tries to do the same thing to you. But to speak to each other puts the relationship first, above being right, above everything else is being in right relationship with each other and with God.

It is easy to talk about, but doing is hard. Trust me I know. This morning, I have no cards for you to write on but I would encourage you to think now to commit to putting a troubled relationship above being right and to practice giving and receiving forgiveness. Possibly it is to write a letter or inviting this person out for a cup of coffee. Better still, if this person is in the congregation this morning go and share the peace with them.

My friends in Christ. "Where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them." This is God's promise to us. It also affirms that God cares so much about us – really cares – deeply about our relationships, not only with God, but how we treat each other and are treated. God loves us enough to help us better love each other. It is hard to forgive and sometimes even harder to receive forgiveness. But when we do, a new world opens up and we get a glimpse: a glimpse of the Kingdom of God.

Amen.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit let us pray as Jesus taught us.....

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you,
The Lord look upon you with favour and give you (+) peace. Amen.

Dismissal

Heaven had come near.
Go, share the good news!

Thanks be to God.

STTLC Communiqué

In Our Prayers Today.....Joanna Spencer, Marie Lenser, Mike Harrington, Lila Martinat, Irlavere Tubbe, Adele Krieger, Tracy Schori and Christa Reitlingshoefer.

Parents of Post Secondary Students – Applications for the J. Wilmot Harvey Educational Bursary are available in the church office and must be submitted to the Church Secretary by September 30, 2026.

Offering Envelope Box Set Review.... The Finance Committee is issuing a survey letter to those who received a 2026 box set of offering envelopes. You are asked to identify how you would like to make future offerings starting in 2027. Options are described in the letter. Responses are due by October 13 to the Church Office or on-line using a provided QR code. Thank you.

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