



Church At Home
St. Timothy's Lutheran Church – Pembroke, Ontario
Pentecost 16 **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 Savior and Lord. Amen.

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you O Lord.

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. "For this reason, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. 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.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. 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. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you O Christ.

Homily

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

The parable of the Wicked Servant is a prickly one. Prickly in the sense that in many ways it makes us feel really uncomfortable.

It ends the section of Matthew's Gospel in which Jesus talks at length about what relationships in the Christian community are like – that the life of the community – the family of God – is the most important thing in the world, and those who want to be members of it are called to be everything in their power to nourish and strengthen the bonds of their love.

Nothing is to get in the way of that, not their quarrels with one another, not their rivalries, no their tendency to put each other down, not even their blatant sins. If one of them goes astray, they are to leave the rest of the flock and go find the lost one; if one of them does wrong and separates themselves from the community, they are to go and try to bring them back.

Listening to Jesus go on and on and on in this vein, Peter becomes concerned about what, exactly, is required of him. Peter is like many of us who want guidelines and lean toward, order, and predictability; a limit to how far he must go with this relationship business. And so, Peter asks the question, "Lord how often shall my brother sin against me, and if I forgive him? As many as seven times?" He must have thought he was being generous, that seven was a lot of times, more times than most people can forgive anyone and it would satisfy the law. Yet if we have learned anything from Matthew this summer, especially Matthew's parables, it's that the Kingdom of Heaven refuses to bend toward our need for reasoning and explanations, our desire for chartable paths, even if we think we too are generous in forgiving seven times. And Jesus replies in this translation, "Seventy-seven times" while others say: seventy times seven, or seven times seven. Let's face it – it hardly matters how you translate it because, no matter how you slice it, it's a heck of a lot of times to forgive the same person for sinning against you.

And then Jesus tells a parable about forgiveness that, well, only intensifies his response to Peter. The parable turns on the contrast between just how much one person is forgiven and how little that same person is asked to – and refuses to – forgive. It is important to put the parable into today's context.

A talent was about 130 lbs. of silver and would take a laborer about fifteen years to earn. Which means that the servant owed the king about 130,000 years of labor! In other words, he would never, ever be able to pay this debt back, yet the king forgives the debt. The king throws out the accounting ledger – at least as far as this servant is concerned. He accepts the risk of remaining in a relationship. For reasons known only to himself, he cancels his servant's debt and gives him back his life again, out of the goodness of his royal heart.

By comparison, a denarius was worth about a day's wage, which meant that the second servant owed the first about a hundred days of labor – no small debt. But still...and everyone who hears this parable gets it...how could he possibly not overlook that (relatively) minor debt when he had just been forgiven an impossibly huge one? The

parable closes, as the unforgiving servant is handed over for punishment until he pays and Jesus warns that we, too, must forgive others or face the consequences.

I believe it is safe to say that we have at one time in our lives reacted as the way of the world or as the wicked servant – “I can forgive but I can’t forget!” – “An eye for an eye” – virtually putting our relationship in the jail with that person. Yet when I am able to forgive, it is because I have been forgiven, because thanks to someone else, I know how it feels to have my debts cancelled, my credit restored, my relationship renewed. When it has happened to me, it is like someone has taken a big pink eraser and scrubbed my record clean, or better yet, has retired the ledger with my name on it and refused to keep score any more. It is an incredible experience, but is never done of my own doing. All I have ever been able to do is ask for it – to ask for forgiveness – but when it has been granted it has come to me from outside myself, a free gift from someone I have hurt, who has decided that what is more important than getting even is to remain in relationship with me.

My friends in Christ. That is it – what real forgiveness is all about: pure, unadulterated grace. This is God’s gift to us. God’s forgiveness frees us, heals us to be the people we are called to be. You see forgiveness whether it is God’s or ours creates new possibility as it interrupts the relentless cause and effect rhythm of the world; that is an eye for an eye. The very possibility of forgiveness – again, whether God’s or ours – in turn creates the sheer possibility that things do not always have to be the way they are. I don’t know about you but this very thought is so uplifting, freeing and empowering.

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.

Rally Sunday.....mark Sunday, September 27th on your calendar. Blessing of backpacks and activities for the children will take place during the service and a special fellowship following. You don't want to miss this Sunday!

Ottawa Valley Ministry Area Team invites you to....

Reformation Service on Sunday, October 16 at 3:00 pm at the Rankin Community Center. Guest preacher is Rev. Matthew Brown, Parish of the Valley. Dinner to follow at 5:00 pm. Tickets for the dinner are \$35.00 and available from the church office or Pastor Bruce until October 4th. Please see the "Our Community" bulletin board for more information.

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