

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
 Luke 17:1-10/ Forgiven

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[Jesus says,] “If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him.”

The greatest gift we can receive as Christians is the forgiveness of sins. For this reason, we are here today. It's not because we want to put on a good front. It's not because we have done it our whole lives. It's not because we think we have to; even though God has commanded that we remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

Why does God want us to be here on this day at this moment? He wants to give us His free gifts; for this reason, the Holy Spirit has led us here today. The Lord wishes to shower you with the forgiveness of sins.

With this forgiveness the Holy Spirit empowers us to extend our heavenly Father's love toward others. How best to do this is to forgive those who sin against us.

The Lord says in **John 15:13** “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.” Not far behind that act of love is the act our Lord mentions in our text: **“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.”**

When your brother or sister in Christ sins against you and later says, "I repent" or "I am sorry I sinned against you," you are obligated out of Christian love to say, "I forgive you."

Christ has commanded you to forgive whoever sins against you and repents. Because we confess the Name of Jesus, we should want to extend to others the love and the forgiveness our heavenly Father has first given us. He wants us to be forgiven. He also wants us to be forgiving.

Our Lord also says in verse 4 of our text, **“If he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him.”**

Matthew 18:21-22, Peter asks the Lord, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” ²²Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.”

Our Lord is not putting a limit on the number of times we are to forgive someone, not seven, not seventy times seven. The Lord is not telling us to withhold forgiveness the 491st time someone has sinned against us.

The Lord is not even telling us to keep a record of how many times someone has sinned against us, for even the Lord does not do this to us, as the Psalmist writes, **Psalm 130:3** “If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?”

We are not to simply forgive and forget, but we are to forgive and continue to forgive.

Yet time after time we have shown ourselves unable and unwilling to express this Christian love. Charity does not seem to begin at home for us; it seems to end there.

We are less than willing to forgive those who trespass against us. Rather than forgive the ones who trespass against us, we hold grudges against them.

We deny them the forgiveness our Lord has instructed us to give them if they repent. We prefer to remain offended. We seek to exact revenge, and often times, we do so with our tongues.

We waste no time announcing how they did us wrong. We take pleasure in destroying the reputation and good name of the one who sinned against us.

We slander them. We betray them. We bear false testimony against our neighbor. But we don't forgive him. We don't seek to be reconciled with him.

What does this say about us? We are petty. We are small. We lack a proper understanding of the Second Table of the Law. The relationship with our neighbors; we do not love our neighbors as ourselves.

We do not have this proper Second Table relationship because we lack a proper First Table relationship with God; we do not love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and with all our strength.

We do not have the love of Christ in our sin-filled hearts. The lack of this love results in our lack of forgiving others. This means that, if we do not forgive others their trespasses, we should not expect the Lord to forgive us.

He says in **Mark 11:26**, "But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

We should not be arrogant and expect to come to the Lord's Table and receive His forgiveness when we refuse to forgive others.

Our sinful pride makes mockeries of the Means of Grace. We remain sinful and unclean, for we despise the gifts, and therefore, the Giver of the gifts, God Himself. We remain lost and condemned creatures. Lost and condemned in our sins.

We hear in the baptismal rite, "We would be lost forever unless delivered from sin, death, and everlasting condemnation. But the Father of all mercy and grace has sent His Son Jesus Christ, who atoned for the sin of the whole world that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Our heavenly Father knows that, left to ourselves, we would remain lost and unforgiven. Out of His deep and great love for us, He sent His only-begotten Son into the world to bear our sins and be our Savior.

He sacrificed His Son. His only Son, whom He loved, so that our sins would be atoned for and that our forgiveness would be won once and for all.

At the right time, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. His death won our forgiveness. When our Lord was being nailed to the cross.

He did not wait for us sinners 2000 years later to repent, but He prayed for us whose sins nailed Him to the cross, even as He prayed for those who physically nailed Him to the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (23:34a).

Through the Holy Spirit at work in us, we are hearing the good news that our heavenly Father has forgiven our sins for Jesus' sake.

And by this same Spirit we rejoice that our sins have been forgiven in the Name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit who creates in us clean hearts and renews a right spirit within us.

He casts us not away from His presence nor takes Himself away from us. He restores to us the joy of our Lord's salvation and upholds us with this same free Spirit.

And now the Holy Spirit turns our eyes, minds, ears, and hearts toward the Lord's Table, that we may hear our Lord's invitation to eat of His body and drink of His blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sins.

He bids you to first be reconciled to your brothers and sisters in Christ, that you first forgive each other in order that you may receive the fullness of God's blessings and gifts that He offers in the Sacrament of the Altar, that the Lord would increase your faith.

Through this holy meal our Lord forgives, renews, and strengthens us that we would be better able and gladly willing to forgive those who sin against us, even if seven times in a day they sin against us and seven times in a day say, "I repent."

We may then join our voices with our forgiven brothers and sisters with the Psalmist who says: **Psalm 119:164** Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules.

The Lord judges us righteous for Jesus' sake, for, as the prophet Habakkuk says: "The righteous shall live by his faith" ([Hab. 2:4b](#)). God grant this in Jesus' Name and for His sake. Amen