

THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Text: St. Luke 16:1-9

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Whenever I bring up the subject of forgiveness in a Bible study, I am invariably asked, *“Pastor, when I forgive someone does that mean I have to forget as well?”* I believe the best answer to that question comes from the Word of God itself. The psalmist tells us, *“As far as the east is from the west, So far has He [that is, God] removed our transgressions from us.”* The prophet, Jeremiah, writing to God’s people of the New Covenant and the forgiveness it will bring, tells us, *“For I [again, God] will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”* The prophet, Isaiah, pleading with an unfaithful people, records these words of God, *“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.”* And the prophet, Ezekiel, writing down what God has commanded him of those who repent, leaves us these words, *“None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him....”*

In light of the scriptural evidence, I would say that God has been quite clear, then, on just what it means to forgive. So, yes, you must forget the sins of those who have offended you! After all, in what other way should a Christian respond to God’s grace? If you say that you forgive but will not forget, is that really forgiveness? I think not! I also think that God agrees. Indeed, to forgive but refuse to forget is not forgiveness at all, and such so-called forgiveness flies in the face of the grace of God.

Therefore, if God so forgives you, forgetting all your trespasses, shall you not also do the same? What good does it afford you if you choose to rewrite what God has already blotted out from the record of sins? Would it not be to your advantage to hold to the grace God has shown you and share the same with your brothers and sisters? Is this not what you pray for in the LORD’s Prayer when you pray, *“forgives us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”*? We Christians are to be stewards of God’s grace, dispensing it freely even as we received it freely, not holding grudges and remembering old hurts that only do damage to our own souls.

For the grace of God, is truly the greatest of riches. We are not to store it up and keep it only for ourselves; it is to be shared. Sharing God’s grace, which we so freely received, we also receive from God rewards a hundredfold; rewards that gain for us never-ending life and eternal friendship of the saints and angels in Heaven; a reward received, in *“good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over... put into your bosom.*

To forgive and forget, is to your benefit, for as JESUS also said, *“For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”* What excuse will you offer then, as you stand before our LORD on Judgment Day if having received such riches you left them buried in

the ground instead of investing them in the life of another of God's children? Share then, the riches you have received, for you are not the lord and master of God's grace; you are God's steward appointed to manage His grace by sharing it with all who are in need.

Of course, you know all of this. Your heart, which bears the inscription of God's Law tells you so. It is almost as though the chisel used to carve God's Law into solid granite, was also used to painfully chisel His Law upon your heart of stone; a pain, if you are honest with yourself, you feel every time you transgress the Law. So yes, we are painfully aware of what we should do, yet, what we should do, that we cannot do.

Of all the things we Christians know we should do, perhaps this is the one thing we do the least. We find it hard to forgive and we find it impossible to forget. Ask any loved one, especially your spouse. In our relationships with those we love we find the recall of hurts or offenses agitating our minds and hearts at the most inopportune times, especially during arguments as we try to heap burning coals upon their heads and score a win during the heat of the moment. All of us who are, or ever have been married, know the folly of bringing up past, and supposedly forgiven sins, in the heat of an argument. It is like adding gasoline to a fire; it is likely to cause an explosion. We all know it, and yet, we all do it.

And who among you has not thought or said, *"How many times do I have to tell you?"* when frustrated or aggravated by your children, siblings, or parents? JESUS answered this question as well. When Saint Peter asked JESUS if he must forgive one who sinned against him more than seven times, our LORD answered saying, *"I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."* His answer means that there should never be a record of forgiveness between brothers and sisters of CHRIST. We must always be ready to forgive, and we must always be ready to forget.

Therefore, do not squander your Master's goods; rather, forgive and forget. Give to your brothers and sisters the same grace, the same mercy and compassion, your FATHER in Heaven has shown to you. Let your love and forgiveness be real and beyond all doubt, remembering that God has given the same to you. Such works of love will follow you before the judgment seat of CHRIST, where He, who is love incarnate, love in the flesh, who shows mercy and forgiveness to those who are undeserving, will separate your sins from you *"As far as the east is from the west...."*

This is what JESUS came to do; to forgive our sins. He knows how hard it is for us to forgive and forget. He knows that on our own we have no strength, nor even a desire so to do. So, He has made of Himself our example, and submitted Himself to the pain of the Cross, dying for us while we were still His enemies, that we may be forgiven, and our sins, forgotten. For our sins, too, are *"crucified, dead, and buried,"* in Him, and when, on the third day, JESUS arose *"again from the dead"* in His tomb, our sins remained—forgotten.

If you have forgotten this truth; if you are ever in doubt of this wonderful truth, then remember it as you eat of His Body and drink of His Blood given and shed for you. Is it not written by St. Paul, *"For as often as you eat this Bread and drink this Cup, you proclaim the*

LORD's death till He comes.”? For what reason did He die if it was not to forgive your sins and remove them from you *“As far as the east is from the west...”* that is, that your sins be forgiven and forgotten? If this is not the purpose of our LORD's sacrifice, then what was the purpose?

If you have forgotten this truth; if you are ever in doubt of this wonderful truth, then remember your Baptism, for there, in those Holy Waters, your sins have been forgiven and forgotten as CHRIST marked you with His Name and sealed you with His death against death as one redeemed by CHRIST the crucified.

You are now an epistle of CHRIST JESUS to a sinful, fallen, world. Yet, not just any epistle; you are a love letter meant to announce the grace, mercy, and love of your FATHER in Heaven, who has removed from you your sins and blotted out all your iniquities. Trust in and share the same, for you are, indeed, a disciple of CHRIST, recreated to reflect His image.

“A disciple,” our LORD tells us, *“is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. “It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master.”* Hold fast, then, to Christ and rejoice. Share His love and forgiveness, and forget the sins of those who have offended you, that you be like your Teacher and Master who has announced to you the same, with the words, *“I forgive you all your sins.”*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

✠ ✠ ✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠ ✠ ✠

Rev. Raymond D. Parent II
Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church
Crestview, Florida
8/14/22 A✠D