

If such a person fails to respond to private counselling, he or she is to be judged by two of the disciples. What they decide, God will ratify. But they should realize that God forgives many times; however there are limits – as Jesus explains in a parable. The story-line of the parable is straight-forward. There are three episodes: a king decides to “settle accounts with his slaves” (v. 23, or possibly with court officials or even with finance ministers or tax gatherers); one of them owes “ten thousand talents” (v. 24), i.e. millions of dollars (to Jesus’ audience, as much as the fabled riches of Egyptian and Persian kings); he, of course, is unable to pay, so (as Mosaic law permitted) he and his family are to be sold; when he seeks forgiveness of the loan, the king grants it. (v. 27); But this slave then demands payment of a loan of three month’s wages (“a hundred denarii”, v. 28) from a fellow slave, and when forgiveness is sought, refuses to grant it (v. 30); When the king hears about this, he retracts his forgiveness and has the first slave tortured – probably for ever (v. 34). In v. 35, Jesus identifies the figures in the parable: the king is God, the first slave any Christian, and the second slave any other person. Jesus makes a point in each of the episodes: God loves us so much that he will forgive any sin, however grievous; it is absurd to live in a way contrary to God’s love and mercy; and those who accept forgiveness from God but fail to forgive others likewise will be punished eternally.

© 1996-2016 Chris Haslam

~ Notices ~

Easter Vestries:

Kilnasoolagh Church - 17th September 7.30pm

St Columba’s and Christ Church Spanish Point -
20th September after 11.30 service at St Columba’s

Elections for the following posts: People’s and Rector’s Church Wardens, People’s and Rector’s Glebe Wardens, and other members of the Select Vestry; the Secretary and Treasurer will also be appointed. As this year marks the *Triennium* we shall also be electing the Parochial Nominators and Diocesan Synod Representatives. For a description of roles and responsibilities please see the Parish Handbook (available at the back of Church and also by emailing the Rector). **Please ensure that you are on the list of registered members of your parish Church - see Church Wardens to check. Please refer to the Parish Handbook A copy of the Easter Vestry Report is also available at the back of church and via email.**

Prayers - Prayers are said daily for the welfare of our community, our nation and the world. If you have any particular issue that you would like to be prayed for, do please email me on frkevinobrien@me.com or call me on 065 672 4721.

Online services - These continue each Sunday, in addition to the weekly meditations on Facebook. Our website <https://clareanglicans.ie> has significantly developed, so please do scroll down the opening page to explore the new sections and information.

- Worship - a number of videos of services
- Pray - leaflets and resources on ways of praying
- Explore - videos of some inspiring speakers
- Think Question Believe - a parish podcast
- Viewpoint - videos on the basics of Christianity
- Rector’s Blog - articles, thoughts, opinions

Rector: Email: frkevinobrien@me.com Tel: 065 672 4721

New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicized Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. <http://nrsvbibles.org> The *Common Worship* psalter is © The Archbishops’ Council of the Church of England, 2000. *Common Worship* texts are available at <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources>



14th Sunday after Trinity (Year A) Readings and Hymns

Collect

Almighty God, whose only Son has opened for us a new and living way into your presence: Give us pure hearts and steadfast wills to worship you in spirit and in truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Suggested Hymns - *For the online service you might like to view these hymns with lyrics on YouTube.*

- 1) Praise my soul the King of Heaven
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDe0ABw5IHs>
- 2) Bless the Lord, my Soul
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYLKrFOLS-E>
- 3) Jesus lives: thy terrors now
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTT7LfQqcT4>
- 4) Take my life and let it be
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gf11rReeWIs>

Genesis 50:15-21

Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph’s brothers said, ‘What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?’ So they approached* Joseph, saying, ‘Your father gave this instruction before he died, “Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.” Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father.’ Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, ‘We are here as your slaves.’ But Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones.’ In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Psalms 103

Bless the Lord, O my soul, ♦
and all that is within me bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul, ♦
and forget not all his benefits;
Who forgives all your sins ♦
and heals all your infirmities;
Who redeems your life from the Pit ♦
and crowns you with faithful love and compassion;
Who satisfies you with good things, ♦
so that your youth is renewed like an eagle’s.
The Lord executes righteousness ♦
and judgement for all who are oppressed.
He made his ways known to Moses ♦
and his works to the children of Israel.
The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, ♦
slow to anger and of great kindness.
He will not always accuse us, ♦
neither will he keep his anger for ever.
He has not dealt with us according to our sins, ♦
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.
For as the heavens are high above the earth, ♦
so great is his mercy upon those who fear him.
As far as the east is from the west, ♦
so far has he set our sins from us.
As a father has compassion on his children, ♦
so is the Lord merciful towards those who fear him.

Romans 14: 1-12

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgement on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgement on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honour of the Lord. Also, those who eat, eat in honour of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honour of the Lord and give thanks to God.

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God. For it is written,

'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.'

So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

Matthew 18: 21-35

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 should 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 should 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.'

Commentary

Genesis

Genesis is the first book of the Bible. It begins with two versions of the creation story, neither of them intended to be scientific but telling us why we are on earth. In the story of Adam and Eve, it tells us that we are responsible, under God, for the care of all creation. It then continues with the stories

of the patriarchs: Abraham (who enters into a covenant (or treaty) with God), Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

Psalm 103

The psalmist, from his very being ("my soul"), praises God for all he has done for him. God has cured him of a physical disease ("diseases", v. 3). ("You" and "your" means one and one's.) Illness was seen as punishment for sin, so healing is a sign of forgiveness of it ("iniquity", v. 3), i.e. redemption to a good relationship with God. The psalmist was so ill that he felt his life slipping away, of descending into "the Pit" (v. 4, called Sheol elsewhere.) It was the place of the dead, where humans retained only faint glimmerings of life. God has restored him to youthful vigour (v. 5) (Eagles were proverbial for their vigour.) Vv. 6-18 contrast God with humans: God is just (especially to the oppressed), "merciful" (v. 8) and loving ("gracious") to those who hold him in reverence ("fear him", vv. 11, 13). He is slow to anger and forgiving (vv. 9-10, 12). He is like a "father" (v. 13) to us; he realizes our frailty (vv. 14-16). Per the superscription, this psalm was written after Nathan had brought David to admit his guilt regarding Bathsheba, so when it speaks of rebuilding Jerusalem (v. 18) this may be a reference to public fence-mending David did then. The emphasis is on an individual's sin, and prayers for personal pardon and restoration. The psalmist seeks cleansing from "iniquity" (v. 2) and "sins" (v. 9) He was sinful even before his birth (v. 5). In v. 6, he knows that God will seek truth in his very being; this is where he will receive understanding ("wisdom"). Perhaps v. 8b says he is ill – because of his sin. He even asks God to hide his "face from my sins" (v. 9), to be so gracious and compassionate as to turn a blind eye. May God restore him, bring him back to godliness, give him a clear conscience, a "clean heart" (v. 10) and a "new ... spirit". Only God can purify. May God give him joy and sustenance, through his "holy spirit" (v. 11). Restored, he will proclaim God's ways, for God wishes inner godliness, not sacrifices (vv. 13-17). God loves those who hold him in awe and keep his pact for ever, through all generations (vv. 17-18). He "rules over all" (v. 19), so honour "the Lord" (v. 22), all he has created ("all his works", v. 22), whether you be in heaven (vv. 20-21) or on earth (vv. 22).

Romans 14:1-12

Paul writes about two kinds of Christians: those who being "weak in faith" concern themselves with details and added practices (rather than the main objective) and the strong who concentrate on God's purposes. The "weak" are to be welcomed as full members of the community "for God has welcomed them" (v. 3). The particular practices (of piety) mentioned are not eating meat ("eat only vegetables", v. 2), fasting regularly (vv. 5-6) and abstaining from "wine" (v. 21). In Roman society, it was considered ill-mannered to "pass judgement" (v. 4) on the conduct of another master's servant; he was answerable to his "own lord" or master. Similarly, each Christian is answerable to "the Lord" and should not be criticized. One's own conviction (v. 5) before God is what matters. Living (and dying) for God is our objective (v. 8); we should not judge; God will judge our conduct at the end of time: "each of us will be accountable to God" (v. 12).

In 14:13-15:6, Paul writes to the strong, those who see the purpose of life clearly. They should refrain from causing others to lose their faith; and not let their ideas and practices, however good, be misconstrued as evil. Rather they are to "pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding" (v. 19). It is through living in a manner consistent with one's conscience that one achieves a right relationship with God (v. 22). One's actions must be founded in faith (v. 23).

Matthew 18:21-35

Jesus has told the disciples how the community is to discipline those who disrupt its harmony by going against God's ways.