
Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

First Reading *Sirach 27:30—28:9*

Those who seek God's mercy must be merciful toward others.

Responsorial Psalm *Psalm 103:1-4,9-12*

A song of praise to God who is kind and merciful.

Second Reading *Romans 14:7-9*

We belong to the Lord.

Gospel Reading *Matthew 18:21-35*

Jesus teaches that ***we must forgive one another as God has forgiven us.***

Background on the Gospel Reading

Today's Gospel reading directly follows [last week's Gospel](#) in which ***Jesus taught the disciples how to handle disputes and conflict within the Christian community.***

In today's reading Peter asks Jesus ***how many times one ought to extend forgiveness to another.*** Peter proposes a reasonable number of times, perhaps seven. Jesus replies by extending Peter's proposal by an enormous amount; not just seven times should one forgive, but 77 times. The parable of the unforgiving servant is Jesus' elaboration of his initial reply to Peter. Through the parable we come to understand the depths of God's mercy toward us and the results of our acceptance of God's forgiveness.



The king in the parable decides to settle accounts with his servants. We are told that one servant in particular owes the king an enormous sum of money. ***Despite the promise of the servant, it is unlikely that he would ever be able to repay the debt that he owes. The king is moved by the humility of the pleading servant and mercifully forgives the debt.*** Rather than displaying gratitude for this forgiveness, the servant confronts a fellow servant who owes him a small debt—a pittance when compared with the amount that was owed to the king. The unmerciful servant refuses the pleas of his fellow servant and sends the servant to prison.

A few other servants tell the merciful king about the actions of the unforgiving servant. The king punishes the servant because he refused to show the kind of mercy he had himself received from the king. Jesus concludes by indicating that this is how it will be with God and those who refuse to forgive one another.



There is a temptation to quantify forgiveness as Peter tried to do, but Jesus' point is that forgiveness is not about quantity—the number of times we extend forgiveness to another. In the parable the king's forgiveness is like God's forgiveness, and it transforms us, helping us to be as forgiving as God. The lesson is clear: If we hoard God's mercy while showing no mercy to others, we risk forfeiting the effects of God's mercy in our lives.

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

Making the Connection (Grades 1, 2, and 3)

Gospel Reading - *Matthew 18:21-35*

Jesus teaches that we must forgive one another as God has forgiven us.

Forgiveness can be challenging for younger children, who are still learning how to empathize and understand the point of view of others. We can support young children in forgiving others by reminding them that God always forgives them and by helping them remember how it feels to be forgiven.

Materials Needed

- torn piece of fabric and paper, needle, thread, glue, tape



Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Show children the items.

Which of these items would I use to mend the torn fabric? (needle, thread)

What about the torn paper? (the glue or the tape)

2. **We don't just need to mend things. When we do something to harm someone, we also need to mend our relationship with that person. How can we mend our relationship when we harm someone?** (by saying sorry and asking for forgiveness, by not doing the action again)
3. **When we are sorry for having done wrong, God always forgives us. The people who love and care for us forgive us, too. When we are truly sorry, being forgiven helps us know that we are loved and that our relationships are mended. There is another way that we can mend relationships. Let's hear what Jesus says.**
4. Read aloud today's Gospel, Matthew 18:23–35.
5. **Jesus teaches us that we are called to forgive others.**

What does Peter ask Jesus? (How many times must I forgive someone who harms me? Seven?)

What surprising answer did Jesus give Peter? (You must forgive seventy-seven times.)

Jesus said that we must forgive others as God forgives us—often and completely. When we are feeling hurt, forgiving others can be difficult. But we can think about the times that God and others have forgiven us. We can remember the peace we felt after being forgiven. We can remember that other people make poor choices sometimes, just as we do. We can offer them God's love and peace by forgiving them.

6. Conclude by thanking God for his merciful love and asking him to help us have forgiving hearts. ***Pray the Sign of the Cross.***

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

Making the Connection (Grades 4, 5, and 6)

Gospel Reading - Matthew 18:21-35

Jesus teaches that we must forgive one another as God has forgiven us.

Older children are becoming more aware of their need for God's forgiveness and mercy.

We can help them to understand that God's forgiveness ought to change us and lead us to extend forgiveness freely toward others.

Materials Needed

- Scraps of paper
- Pencil/pen

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings



1. ***In our everyday life there are many occasions in which we seek someone's forgiveness or find that another person is seeking our forgiveness. Think back over the past week or so and recall some of these occasions.***

Say: This exercise is for your eyes only. On the scraps of paper that you have, answer these questions by rating yourself on a scale of one to five:

(1) How quickly do you forgive? 1 if you are quick to forgive; 5 if you need time to work through an offense before you forgive.

(2) How easily do you make apologies and seek the forgiveness of others? 1 if you make apologies easily and quickly; 5 if you take time before you can seek forgiveness from others.

2. ***Each of us handles such situations differently. We may handle situations differently depending on the situation that requires forgiveness. In today's Gospel, Peter asks Jesus how many times one ought to forgive another person. Let's listen to Peter's question and Jesus' answer.***
3. Invite a volunteer to read the first verse of today's Gospel, Matthew 18:21.
4. ***Was Peter's question reasonable? Is seven an appropriate number of times to forgive another person? How many times do you think one ought to extend forgiveness to another person?***
5. Invite another volunteer to read the remainder of today's Gospel, Matthew 18:22-35.
6. ***How many times does Jesus say one ought to forgive another person?*** (not seven but 77 times; a huge number of times)
7. ***Jesus puts a number on his answer to Peter, but that is only to make a point. The parable isn't about the quantity of times to forgive, the parable teaches about the quality of forgiveness and how one ought to behave once God has forgiven you.***
Ask: What does the servant do that makes the king angry? (He refuses to forgive his fellow servant the debt that he owes.)
Because we have all received God's forgiveness, God expects that we will also be forgiving toward others.
Jesus' answer to Peter's question is found at the end of the parable.
The number of times that we forgive another is less important than the depth of our forgiveness. We must forgive one another from the heart.
8. Conclude in prayer together ***asking for the wisdom to be merciful toward others as God has shown mercy on us.***
9. Pray today's psalm, Psalm 103, or pray the Lord's Prayer.

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

Making the Connection (Grades 7, 8, and 9)

Gospel Reading - *Matthew 18:21-35*

Jesus teaches that we must forgive one another as God has forgiven us.

Children of this age have a tendency to say “no problem” or “OK” when asked for forgiveness but then continue to harbour ill feelings or resentment. Their words are not a true indication of their attitude. Jesus’ parable can help them recognize that forgiveness, while not always easy, is God-like.

Materials Needed

- None

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. ***This Sunday’s Gospel Reading begins with a question from Peter, and a strange one at that. Jesus’ answer may seem equally strange. Let’s listen to Matthew 18:21–22.***
2. Invite a volunteer to read the passage aloud.
3. Say: ***You probably keep track of a lot of things—how much spending money you have, how many days until the next school holiday—but how many of you count the number of times you have forgiven someone? Do you think Peter did? Was Jesus really serious when he said to forgive 77 times? If not, what do you think was the point of Jesus’ answer?*** (Allow time for discussion.)
4. ***Maybe we’ll get a clearer answer when we read the remainder of the Gospel Reading.***
5. Invite another volunteer to read aloud Matthew 18:23–35.
6. ***We may have hoped that Jesus was serious when he said to forgive 77 times. Most of us have already done that, which would mean that we’ve met our quota and are off the hook. But that’s not the point. Jesus told a story to let us know that he isn’t talking about the quantity but rather the quality of our forgiveness.***

The king in the parable didn’t negotiate terms with the servant who owed him a great deal of money. Rather, when the servant claimed hardship, he was forgiven all that he owed. Not satisfied, however, the servant turned around and went to collect a small amount of money owed him.

Do you recall his response when his fellow servant asked for more time to pay? (He refused the fellow servant and had him thrown in prison.)

Jesus’ point is that numbers are not the issue when it comes to forgiving. The king in the parable offers forgiveness without condition; his forgiveness, like God’s, is genuine and total. From God who is merciful and always ready to forgive, we learn to be forgiving as well. As the parable indicates, forgiveness is essentially a matter of a loving heart. There are no strings attached.

7. Conclude by praying quietly for the courage to be genuine and compassionate when offering forgiveness. Then pray together the [Sign of the Cross](#).

Sign of the Cross in sign for the deaf. <https://youtu.be/IDteFYGCo7k>

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

Family Connection

Gospel Reading - *Matthew 18:21-35*

Jesus teaches that we must forgive one another as God has forgiven us.

Children learn to trust God's mercy and forgiveness when they experience forgiveness from those closest to them. We hope that we model God's love and forgiveness within our family life. Today's Gospel reminds us that forgiveness is measured by its quality more than its quantity.

Invite your family to consider some recent **times when family members sought the forgiveness of another**. Ask if there were any statements made that put conditions on our forgiveness such as "I will play this game with you if you apologize for knocking over my blocks" or "I will accept your apology after you clean up your room." Do we sometimes "keep count" or put conditions on our forgiveness of one another? This is something we may be doing without realizing it.

Read together today's Gospel, Matthew 18:21-35.

Ask if ***we sometimes find ourselves sounding like Peter***, concerning ourselves with quantity of forgiveness rather than offering forgiveness abundantly and unconditionally.

Reflect upon the parable that Jesus tells.

What does the servant do that makes the king so angry? He refuses to forgive his fellow servant the debt that he owes.

Because we have all received God's forgiveness, God expects that we will also be forgiving toward others.

Jesus' answer to Peter's question is found at the end of the parable. ***The number of times that we forgive one another is less important than the depth of our forgiveness. We must forgive one another from the heart.***

Conclude in prayer together that God's love and forgiveness is evident in your family life.

Pray together today's psalm, Psalm 103,

or the Lord's Prayer.

